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Inter-Arab Affairs

Inter-Arab Affairs: Al-Qadhdhafi Receives Egyptian Foreign Minister Musa

LD2803190396 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1835 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Binghazi, 28 Mar (JANA) — The brother leader of the revolution received Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa. Brother 'Amr Musa arrived today at Benina Airport in Binghazi where he was welcomed by 'Umar Mustafa al-Muntasir, brother secretary of the General People's Committee for External Liaison and International Cooperation

Inter-Arab Affairs: Musa To Deliver Mubarak's Message to al-Qadhdhafi

NC2803170596 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1630 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Benghazi, 28 Mar (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, who is visiting Libya, has stated that he is carrying a message from President Mubarak to Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi, leader of the Libyan revolution. Al-Qadhdhafi is expected to receive Musa this evening.

Musa spoke to Egyptian reporters today before they left on the plane President Mubarak ordered to Libya yesterday at dawn to bring back the passengers of the hijacked plane. He said: Thank God that the problem of the plane ended well. He pointed out that the Libyan authorities made a good effort and that their cooperation was ideal, thus satisfactorily ending the hijacking problem.

Asked whether Egypt will demand the handover of the hijackers, Musa said: We are still in the process of securing the passengers' return to their countries. We are cooperating fully with the Libyan authorities.

Minister Musa said that his talks in Libya will touch on several issues pertaining to bilateral relations and Arab issues. He added that he will extend thanks to the Libyan officials for what they did.

Asked if an Egyptian team is following up on the investigations, he said that the Libyan Government is interrogating the hijackers and that the two governments are cooperating successfully.

Commenting on Col. al-Qadhdhafi's announcement that Libyan pilgrims will fly on Libyan flights from Tripoli and Benghazi, the foreign minister said: This is Libya's business. We hope no problems will occur.

Musa arrived in Benghazi this afternoon on a quick visit that will last one day.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Egyptian Envoy Says Libya To Extradite Hijackers

NC2803215796 Paris AFP in English 2123 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, March 28 (AFP) — Libyan authorities will extradite to Egypt three hijackers who seized an EgyptAir flight and forced it to land in Libya, Egypt's embassy in Libya said Thursday [28 March].

"The hijackers will be sent back to Egypt," the embassy's consul, Mamduh Shu'ayr, told the government daily AL-AKHBAR. The paper's Friday edition, quoting an embassy source, added that the extradition would take place within a matter of hours.

An Egyptian restaurant owner, his son and his nephew hijacked the plane with 153 people on board as it flew between Luxor and Cairo on Wednesday and forced it to land in Libya before giving themselves up.

Libyan leader Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi was vague on their fate Thursday, telling the plane's passengers "we will see later" about extraditing them to Egypt.

Al-Qadhdhafi later held talks with Egypt's Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, who visited Benghazi on Libya's northeast Mediterranean coast to visit the passengers, the Libyan news agency JANA said. The agency gave no details of their talks.

Musa told journalists in Benghazi that the extradition was not an "essential question at this time."

The hijackers were identified by the Egyptian interior ministry as a restaurant owner from Luxor who is mentally ill, Muhammad Mahmud Hamid Salim, and his 17-year-old son and nephew. Salim told the pilot he had dreamed of an imminent assassination attempt against al-Qadhdhafi and had to warn him.

The 142 passengers, mainly Canadian, French and Japanese tourists, and five of the cabin staff returned to Cairo on Thursday to a VIP welcome.

The hijacked plane returned with the remaining three crew members and the passengers' luggage flew back to the Egyptian capital later the same day.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Article Gives Names, Background of Hijackers

NC2803155896 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1530 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 28 Mar (MENA)—The investigations being conducted at Luxor airport into the hijacking of the Egyptian plane have revealed that the three Egyptian hijackers — Muhammad Mahmud Hamid, alias Najib; Khalid Mahmud; and 'Ali Mahmud — booked their tickets on Tuesday [26 March], the day before the hijacking.

Security sources have stated that investigations have proved that the three hijackers succeeded in smuggling some explosives into the airport in flour sacks that passed undetected.

The sources added that the main hijacker, Muhammad Mahmud Hamid, has worked in the tourist industry for 15 years and does not belong to any organization. Some sources pointed out that he is a fame seeker.

According to the sources, Hamid was granted a piece of land by the municipality. He divided it into small pieces and leased them by subcontract. The municipality withdrew the land and gave him a tourist restaurant to run called "Al-Husayn's Restaurant".

The passenger list showed that the plane was carrying 145 passengers, including 55 Americans, 30 Egyptians, 60 Japanese, a Dutchman, and people of other nationalities.

The security sources have said that the Ministry of Interior is in the process of preparing a detailed statement on the incident and the perpetrators to be issued later. The statement will detail the findings of the security agencies' investigations.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Egyptian Interior Ministry Says Hijacker Mentally Ill

NC2803170896 Paris AFP in English
1641 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, March 28 (AFP) — An Egyptian restaurant owner who hijacked a plane to Libya with his nephew and son is mentally ill, an alcoholic and a drug addict, the Interior Ministry said Thursday [28 March].

The ministry identified the hijacker as Muhammad Mahmud Hamid Salim, 42, from the southern city of Luxor. He was helped by his son Khalid and his nephew Ahmad, both 17 and unemployed.

The three hijacked an Egyptair airliner with 153 people on board during a flight from Luxor to Cairo on Wednesday and forced it to land in Libya before giving themselves up.

The jet's pilot said the hijacker was visibly high on drugs and said he wanted to warn Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi of a dream in which he saw the Libyan leader assassinated.

Police said Salim suffers from epilepsy aggravated by depression after the authorities shut down his restaurant more than a year ago for "administrative irregularities." He sold his house to try to set up a new restaurant without success, and was flying to Cairo to see a psychiatrist who he visited regularly.

According to his neighbours, Salim claimed he could see the future through his dreams. But they said he was generally quiet, a devout Moslem and passionate supporter of Arab unity.

His son was also seeking treatment for a drug habit which had caused him to drop out of his studies, neighbours said.

Salim, dressed in a gray galabiya (a traditional robe), was carring a grenade, molotov cocktails and explosive powder when he broke into the cockpit, the pilot said.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Hijacked Passengers Return to Cairo

NC2803160096 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1550 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 28 Mar (MENA)—The Egyptian plane carrying the passengers of the hijacked plane returned to Cairo airport from Benghazi at 1720 [1520 GMT] today. The plane was received by Interior Minister Hasan al-Alfi and Tourism Minister Mamduh al-Biltaji.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Hijacked Plane Returns to Cairo

NC2803203896 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2000 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 28 Mar (MENA)—The Egyptair plane that was hijacked yesterday afternoon and forced to land at Tubruq airport in Libya returned to Cairo this evening. The plane, an Airbus 320, is piloted by pilot Amunhutub Nassar, copilot Khalid Abu-al-Makarim, and three technicians.

The Egyptian plane carrying the passengers returned to Cairo earlier today.

Egyptair President Engineer Fahim Rayyan said the plane brought the passengers' baggage, which will be delivered to their owners at their hotels or homes.

Inter-Arab Affairs: League Chief Welcomes al-Qadhdhafi's Call For Arab Summit

NC2803183696 Cairo MENA in English
1758 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 28 Mar (MENA)—Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid said that the call initiated by leader of the Libyan Revolution Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi for convening an urgent Arab summit to be held in Cairo for discussing the [illegible] of the Arab nation comes on due time. 'Abd-al-Majid, in statements today, said that the call is welcomed by all Arab countries. All arrangements will be made to guarantee the success of the summit, he said.

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat, Christopher Discuss 'Latest Developments'

JN2903103796 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0900 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat received a phone call from U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher at dawn today. The conversation dealt with the latest developments in the peace process in light of the military closure imposed on Palestine and the Sharm al-Shaykh summit follow-up meeting. Emphasis was place on the need to continue the peace process.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Urayqat on Committee Meeting, Christopher Statement

JN2903111696 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0900 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, head of the Palestinian delegation to the Sharm al-Shaykh summit's follow-up committee, which is meeting in Washington, said that the meeting dealt with the issues of supporting the peace process and the Palestinian people's needs in light of the continuing military closure imposed on Palestine, as well as dealing with terrorism as a regional and international phenomenon.

Answering a Voice of Palestine question about U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's announcement of a plan to improve the economic conditions in Palestine, 'Urayqat said that the Palestinian people need emergency assistance, not statements. He said that the Palestinian delegation demanded the immediate establishment of a $100 million fund to extend basic assistance to the Palestinian people.

'Urayqat added that during the meeting, a review was made of Israel's violations, represented by its failure to withdraw from Hebron, the arrest campaign in Bi'r Zayt, the violation of the agreements, the confiscation of land, settlement activity, and threats of deportation. He said the Palestinian delegation asked the conferees to take note of the occupation force's actions and to pressure the Israeli Government to commit to the agreements it signed with the Palestinian National Authority.

'Urayqat praised the stands of the European countries, especially France and Italy, and said that the European position is completely in agreement with the Palestinian demands.

Palestinian Affairs: Sha'th Views Summit Follow-Up Committee Meetings, Closure

NC2903082796 Cairo Voice of the Arabs in Arabic 0610 GMT 29 Mar 96

[Telephone interview with Dr. Nabil Sha'th, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, in Gaza, by 'Adil 'Abd-al-Tawwab, in Cairo; date not given—recorded: from the "Dialogue From Afar" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] ['Abd-al-Tawwab] Dr. Nabil, we welcome you to this dialogue.

[Sha'th] Thank you.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] What do you expect from the follow-up committee's discussions in Washington?

[Sha'th] First, we expect them to avert problems and trouble, then we expect benefits. What we are seeing and what the Israelis are trying to achieve at the meeting is to divert it from the main objective for which the Sharm al-Shaykh summit was convened. The summit, led by brother President Husni Mubarak, was a summit for a just peace and for striking terrorism at the same time. It was a balanced summit that took into consideration the interests of the Israelis and the interests of the whole region.

First, together with Egypt and our Arab brothers and European friends, we will try to keep the meeting committed to the Sharm al-Shaykh summit spirit, which was that peace is the major objective and that realizing a just peace is the major requirement of the region. We will also stress that combating terrorism, which is important and necessary for us to build a secure future, requires establishing the political and economic goals of the people in the region, not only through security methods to confront terrorism. There is also the issue of the closure Israel has been imposing on us — a closure to starve and collectively punish us. There has been nothing like this in contemporary history. We want to put an end to this closure; otherwise, everyone in Gaza will become a potential suicide bomber in view of the difficult living conditions there.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] What is the Palestinian side's stance on the agenda of the follow-up committee meetings?

[Sha'th] Our stance is that the Washington meeting must adopt an agenda that reflects the Sharm al-Shaykh summit resolutions, in the formulation of which Egypt played a major role. The Washington meeting should discuss how to finalize peace, how to implement agreements, cooperation on security, and the siege imposed on the Palestinian people.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Has the Palestinian side held contacts to make this meeting concentrate primarily on discussing the peace process?

[Sha'th] Obviously. Our most successful and major contacts are with our Arab brothers, led by Egypt, and our European friends, led by France.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] What is the current situation in the Palestinian self-rule areas now?

[Sha'th] It is on the verge of explosion. I have seen nothing like it in my life — a nation of 2.5 million has a siege imposed on it that does not allow food, medicines, industrial raw materials, cement, or anything through. We here are forbidden from importing or exporting anything. The door Egypt opened for the entry of foodstuffs into Gaza and the exit of agricultural produce exported from here has, in practice, been closed by Israel. Only a trickle of goods goes through now. For example, in one day, of everything that goes through, only 100 tonnes of flour might pass from Egypt into Gaza through Israel. Gaza alone consumes 300 tonnes of flour a day. There is a siege that has stopped all construction. Our factories are not working. Our flowers — we export around 1.5 million flowers a day — are dying on the border because Israel is preventing anything from going through. We have no less than 70-percent unemployment. Our circumstances are very difficult.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] With regard to the problems the Palestinian Authority [PA] areas are suffering, the PA has asked that the self-rule areas should be declared disaster zones. What has echoed from this demand?

[Sha'th] The problem lies not only in our need for aid. We need aid, just as any area is helped when it is afflicted with a political or natural disaster. But Israel does not let the aid through. Therefore, we truly want Arab-European-international pressure on Israel so that it opens the door. We do not want to open the door with Israel. If Israel wants to close doors in our face, we are ready to cut off every contact with it until the Israelis regain their senses and go back to the peace treaty we signed with them. We want to open the door between ourselves and Egypt, first, then with Jordan, second. After that, we want the doors opened through our airport and ports to the rest of the world. We are not demanding that Israel open the door so that we can go there. Israel claims that this is what is shattering its security. We want restrictions to be lifted so that we can have dealings with our major neighbor, Egypt, in the south.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] When will a Palestinian government be formed?

[Sha'th] I expect sometime next week.

['Abd-al-Tawwab] Dear brothers, at the end of our dialogue, we thank Dr. Nabil Sha'th, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, who was with us on the phone from Gaza.

[Sha'th] Thank you.

Palestinian Affairs: Bi'r Zayt 'Strongly' Condemns Israel's 'Illegal Invasion'

TA2803150696 Jerusalem JMCC PRESS SERVICE in English 1330 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Statement issued by Bi'r Zayt University Public Relations Office dated 28 March]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bi'r Zayt — Bi'r Zayt University and its administration, faculty and students strongly condemn the Israeli army's pre-dawn unprovoked, indiscriminate and illegal invasion of the town of Bi'r Zayt and surrounding villages today and its mass detention of approximately 200 Bi'r Zayt University students. Israel's seizure of almost 10 percent of the Bi'r Zayt University student body is a grave violation of human rights and the rule of law on a scale unprecedented in the University's bitter history under Israeli military occupation. It is thus a negative and highly counterproductive signal to a whole generation of students and young people that their rights to education, to the due process of law and to freedom from arbitrary arrest are still in grave jeopardy, as well as a signal to Palestinian residents of West Bank villages that their homes and homeplace are subject to assault at will.

In the pre-dawn hours this morning, large contingents of Israeli army and security services moved into the town of Bi'r Zayt. With loudspeakers blaring that the town was under curfew, teams of soldiers invaded student houses and three apartment buildings housing students, breaking doors, windows and damaging other property as students, and other residents, were seized and taken away. Initial eyewitnesses report that residents of the three buildings were detained without discrimination and estimate detentions from the town of Bi'r Zayt at well over 100, including at least one faculty member. The surrounding villages of Abu-Qashsh and Abu-Shukhaydim were also raided. Initial reports register at least 41 students arrested from Abu-Qashsh alone.

By noon today, University officials, and the attorney of the University's Human Right Action Project have been unable to ascertain where the students are being held. Although Israeli radio reports affirmed that the raid was directed against the University's Gaza students, a narrow majority of arrests reported to date by eyewitnesses are of students from the West Bank. In relation to Gaza students, the university continues to uphold firmly their right to study at Bi'r Zayt University without harassment, and points out that this principle is confirmed by the interim agreements which clearly consider the West Bank and Gaza to be a "single territorial unit."

Travel to the university was blocked until approximately 11AM this morning, leaving students and teachers stranded along the road. Immediately following the opening of the road, officials of the Council for Higher Education and the Ministry of Education came to the University to consult with university administrators about the grave situation. The University believes this is an occasion for all parties interested in the continuance of Palestinian higher education, and the right of education and safety of Palestinian students — as well as the safety and security of Palestinian towns and villages — to stand together against these hostile, provocative and counterproductive Israeli measures.

Palestinian Affairs: Fatah Prepares Action Plan To Protest 'Siege,' Hebron Issue

TA2803164996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Arabic 1430 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Telephone interview with Marwan al-Barghuthi, Fatah secretary in the West Bank, by Yasir 'Atilah on 28 March; place not given — recorded; from the "With the Events" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] ['Atilah] Marwan al-Barghuthi, Fatah secretary in the West Bank: A meeting of the Fatah Higher Committee was held today. What issues were discussed by the committee?

[Al-Barghuthi] This was an emergency meeting to consider the effects of the Israeli siege imposed on the Palestinian territories and people, which could lead to an undesirable situation. In particular, we discussed the issue of the Hebron redeployment. We believe that the postponement of the Hebron redeployment will cause immense negative repercussions in the Palestinian street. It will deepen the impasse in the peace process.

['Atilah] Are you planning to take any steps with regard to these matters?

[Al-Barghuthi] Yes. We have prepared a popular action program for the coming days, including marches and demonstrations, in protest against the Israeli siege policy and nonredeployment from Hebron. Moreover, as you are aware, all Fatah institutions will be holding meetings. The Fatah Central Committee will meet tonight and the Fatah Revolutionary Council will meet on 30 March to examine all these negative developments which have implications for the peace process.

['Atilah] What are the main topics that will be discussed at these two meetings?

[Al-Barghuthi] Basically, the meetings will discuss the political situation, the siege and its effects, ways of dealing with this situation, and the resumption of the talks with the Israeli side. The meetings will also discuss and make preparations for convening the Palestine National Council [PNC] if the redeployment from Hebron is carried out and the siege is lifted.

['Atilah] Have any dates been suggested for convening the PNC?

[Al-Barghuthi] This will depend on the Israeli side's position on two issues: first, lifting the siege, and second, the redeployment from Hebron. I do not believe that the Fatah leadership can set a date for convening the PNC before these things are implemented.

['Atilah] Marwan al-Barghuthi, Fatah secretary in the West Bank, thank you very much.

[Al-Barghuthi] Thank you.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Discusses Israeli 'Siege' With Abington, Larsen

JN2803195496 Gaza Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat today received Edward Abington, U.S. consul-general in Jerusalem, and Terje Larsen, coordinator of UN activities with the Palestinian Authority.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed latest developments in light of the Israeli siege imposed on Palestine.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Leader Urges Fugitive To Surrender to PA

TA2903105596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0905 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Shaykh Jamil Hamami, one of the leaders of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] in the West Bank, has called on Muhammad Dayf, the terrorist responsible for the bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, to turn himself in to the Palestinian Authority [PA]. Hamas activists say that Dayf walks around with explosives strapped to his body and threatens to blow himself up if arrested. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports:

[Ben-Menahem] Shaykh Hamami took part in the negotiations between Hamas and the PA in Cairo, but today he highlights the prominence of the Hamas leadership in the territories, saying that it could immediately solve the problems in the field and that this is why the PA must focus on a dialogue with it.

Shaykh Hamami called on the terrorist Muhammad Dayf, head of Hamas' military wing in Gaza, to turn himself in to the PA and thus serve the interests of the Palestinian people. This is the first time that such a call has been addressed to Dayf by a senior leader in Hamas' political wing, and it remains to be seen whether he will heed it. Hamami further called on all political factions of the Palestinian people, including Hamas, to reach an agreement with the PA.

The Palestinian Security Services have not yet arrested Dayf or Hasan Salamah, the head of the terrorist snake, who are hiding in the PA areas. According to Hamas sources in Gaza, Muhammad Dayf walks around with a belt of explosives strapped to his body and threatens to blow himself up if somebody tries to arrest him. [passage omitted]

[Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew at 1000 GMT on 29 March reports that Shaykh al-Hamami's remarks are included in an interview published today by the East Jerusalem daily AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH.]

Palestinian Affairs: Security Officials Discuss Israeli Moves Against Students

JN2803212596 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1800 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Brigadier General al-Hajj Isma'il Jabr, commander of the Palestinian Police Force in the Palestinian governorates, held an expanded meeting at the Ramallah and al-Birah governorate headquarters this evening. The meeting was attended by Mustafa 'Isa, Ramallah and al-Birah governor; Colonel Jibril al-Rujub, official in charge of Preventive Security; and security officials in the governorate.

They discussed the recent Israeli measures which disrupted studies at Bi'r Zayt University following the arrest by the occupation forces of 371 Gaza Strip students studying at the university. The conferees asserted that these measures do not serve the peace process and violate the provisions of the agreement.

Palestinian Affairs: Fatah Urges PLO Not To Summon PNC Before Redeployment

TA2903091096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Fatah leadership in the West Bank has called on the PLO not to summon the Palestine National Council [PNC] until Israel undertakes to change the IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] deployment in Hebron and lift the closure on the territories.

Marwan al-Barghuthi, Fatah's secretary general in the West Bank, told our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem that the IDF's actions in Bi'r Zayt yesterday were meant to separate the West Bank from the Gaza Strip in contravention of the agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

Palestinian Affairs: Central Committee Member on Upcoming Fatah Meeting, Hebron

JN2803185996 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1100 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Interview with 'Abbas Zaki, Fatah Central Committee and Palestinian Legislative Council member, by unidentified Voice of Palestine correspondent on 28 March; place not given—recorded; from "Today's Events" program]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Ladies and gentlemen: The Fatah Movement's Central Committee will hold a meeting in Gaza this evening. In the following dialogue, 'Abbas Zaki, member of Fatah Movement's Central Committee and member of the Legislative Council, discusses the topics listed on the agenda in light of the current political circumstances.

[Begin recording] [Zaki] Discussions were supposed to focus on the Fatah Movement's internal situation and on consolidating this situation. It appears, however, that discussions will deal with the top issue on our agenda today; namely, Israel's failure to redeploy in the Hebron Governorate. This failure is a violation of the agreements signed with Israel. It also means that we will return to the vicious circle, and that we will face a new challenge.

[Correspondent] As a member of the Legislative Council, what is your position on Israel's failure to abide by its commitment to withdraw from the city of Hebron?

[Zaki] The Israelis used to sound out our stands on any measure they take. They liked this game and they continue to do so. In the Central Committee meetings today, we could issue an urgent call on the Legislative Council — and we could also propose making a move on the international level — to put things in their right place.

Israel interpreted our position on the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre, our desire for peace and our readiness to ignore the blood that was shed the sake of peace, security, and stability as encouragement for them to remain in Hebron as an occupying force under the slogan that we alone want peace. In fact, the Israelis need peace too. However, peace cannot be achieved through trickery or under occupation. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Regarding the evacuation of the occupation forces from Hebron, some Israeli officials said that the Palestinians understand why the Israels did not withdraw from this city.

[Zaki] This is not true and we do not understand this remark at all. As a member of the Legislative Council, I will request brother Abu-'Ala' [Ahmad Quray'] to call for an emergency meeting because Israel does not deal with us in accordance with all the existing agreements.

We will not accept this occupation nor the Israeli remarks and allegations that we understand the slaughtering of our people. If the Israelis are really concerned for security they should implement all measures that will prompt people to believe that there can be future coexistence, peace, security, or relations between both sides.

How can we ever understand Israel's continued exclusion of this city and governorate from the Palestinian body? How can we ever understand that Israel facilitates entry from Jordan into Jericho and entry from Egypt into Gaza far more than the entry from the West Bank into Gaza? It is well known that Israel agreed to safe passages, the release of detainees, and withdrawal from Hebron. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Palestinian Affairs: PLO Requests Arab League Meeting To Discuss Dimona Reactor

JN2803211996 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1800 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The PLO today requested an emergency Arab League Council meeting on the permanent envoys level to discuss the issue of nuclear leakage from the Israeli Dimona reactor.

Muhammad Subayh, Palestine's permanent representative to the League, stressed the need to make a unified Arab call for inspecting the reactor before the occurrence of a nuclear catastrophe in the region.

Subayh said the reactor could collapse at any time, taking into consideration that it was designed in accordance with old technology.

Arab League Secretary General 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid yesterday expressed concern over the possibility of nuclear leakage, and the effects of such leakage on ground water, environment, and citizens.

Egypt began to take samples from soil and water near its border with Israel to verify the existence of radiation leakage.

Palestinian Affairs: Hanan Ashrawi Criticizes Israeli West Bank Raids

LD2803180296 Stockholm Sveriges Radio Network in Swedish 1545 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israeli parachute commandos made night-time raids on several villages in the West Bank and detained over 200 Palestinians. The Israelis were looking for members of the Islamic organization Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement]. For the Palestinians, the raids were a reminder of the occupation, which was supposed to end with the peace process. Our reporter has talked with Hanan Ashrawi, a female Palestinian parliament deputy and a former peace negotiator:

[Begin Ashrawi recording, in English] This is not an act of peace, this is again an act of collective victimization. [end recording]

[Correspondent Cecilia Udden] I do not know if I have any capacity left to feel upset and angry, Hanan Ashrawi says. She sits at her office, where the telephone constantly rings: People whom she represents ring and ask for help. Families who have been separated by the closing of the borders — a mother in Gaza and her children on the West Bank. It is only 100 km between them, but they will not be able to see each other for at least three months.

Hanan Ashrawi, who is a liberal Christian, does not of course have any strong sympathies for the Islamic Hamas and the brain-washed suicide bombers. But she is convinced that Israel's methods of collective punishment will both increase support for Hamas and further undermine the peace process, which is being crumbled to dust. The peace process is contradicting itself, she says.

I asked her whether she has some understanding for the Israeli parachute commandos carrying out the raids in the West Bank in the middle of the night — it could be that they really caught a suicide candidate, or even explosives. No, she says very firmly, this is no fishing expedition where you cast a net into the sea and hope to catch the ugly fish you are looking for:

[Begin Ashrawi recording, in English] No, this is not a fishing expedition. You don't cast a net in the sea in the hope that you will catch the one fish you are looking for. [end recording]

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Returns to Gaza, Comments on UAE Visit

JN2803164896 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1300 GMT 28 Mar 96

['Adil al-Za'nun report on Gaza]

[FBIS Translated Text] His Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat returned to the homeland from the United Arab Emirates [UAE] a short while ago. His visit to the UAE is the first leg of an Arab tour to brief the brother Arab leaders on the deteriorating situation caused by the Israeli military siege imposed on Palestine. President 'Arafat will urge them to support the Palestinian people in overcoming this crisis.

President Yasir 'Arafat described his UAE visit and his meeting with Shaykh Zayid Al Nuhayyan as positive and fruitful. President 'Arafat thanked Shaykh Zayid who offered to build a housing complex in Gaza, stating that it will be named after Shaykh Zayid. President 'Arafat said that this complex, to be built in Gaza, will help provide jobs for Palestinian workers.

In reply to a question on Israel's postponing its withdrawal from the Hebron Governorate, scheduled to take place today, President 'Arafat said that the postponement of the redeployment in Hebron violates the agreements and commitments that were signed with Israel.

President 'Arafat said that what took place in Bir Zayt University yesterday contradicts the agreement.

Algeria

Algeria: Official Comments on Human Rights Issues

LD2803162196 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Interview with Rezzag Bara, chairman of the National Human Rights Monitoring Group, by unidentified studio announcer in the studio — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] As you know, ladies and gentlemen, President of the Republic Liamine Zeroual yesterday received the members of the Executive Bureau of the National Human Rights Monitoring Group led by Kemal Rezzag Bara. At the meeting, the president of the republic expressed his profound interest in and care for all the issues relating to respecting for human rights and public freedoms in Algeria. The members of the group found the president of the republic fully aware of all the preoccupations and concerns regarding the issues under discussion. This was confirmed by Rezzag Bara, chairman of the group, in the statement which he made after leaving the the office of the president.

Rezzag Bara said that during the meeting he presented to the president of the republic the annual report on the activities of the group, and pointed out that the recommendations in report are aimed at entrenching the rule of law. Therefore, Mr. Bara, we welcome you once again, and I give the microphone to my colleague, Chaban, to conduct the interview.

[Chaban] Mr. Rezzag Bara, talking about human rights in Algeria is not an easy issue. Proceeding from the will and concern of the president of the republic to protect and promote human rights in Algeria we would like this interview to be very frank. To start, can we talk today and in detail about the contents of the report which was presented yesterday to the president of the republic?

[Bara] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate; I thank Channel One for inviting me. You know that the National Human Rights Monitoring Group is a body which has its own regulations as outlined in the 1992 law; they stipulate that the annual report of the National Human Rights Monitoring Group will be presented to the president of the republic and to the chairman of the parliamentary body and will be published for the benefit of the public two months after presentation. God willing, we will publish the 1994-95 report two months after its presentation to the president of the republic.

The report is accompanied by a group of documents relating to the documented cases. We intend to publish these annexes only after dealing with and following up the issues relating to them.

[Chaban] Before presenting the report there has been a lot of talk in recent weeks about accusations levelled against Algeria in the U.S. State Department's report on violations of human rights. What is the answer of the National Human Rights Monitoring Group to such accusations?

[Bara] We have looked into the U.S. State Department's report regarding the question of human rights in Algeria. You know that since the beginning of the Eighties — since President Carter's Administration — the U.S. State Department has annually publishing a report on the question of human rights throughout the world. This is a catalogue of a number of matters which the U.S. State Department looks at with its own private standards within the framework of the so-called internationalisation of human rights. But it is within the framework of U.S. concepts. We have noted two things in this framework: the first is that the U.S. State Department is still talking about the question of legitimacy in Algeria. It used very strong terms to describe the nature of the Algerian political system. It did not take into account what has taken place in this country regarding the continuation of the democratic track and the election of a legitimate presidential body which enjoys the full support of the Algerian people.

We also noted that the State Department uses what is termed as double-standards with regard to the conceptions. We note that its dealings with the issues of human rights in some areas of the world are based on a kind of containment, while in other areas there are very sharp attacks — we should not give precise examples but Algerian society is fully aware of this double-standard policy with regard to the evaluation of the state of human rights in our country and in other countries of the world. Furthermore, by virtue of our own civilization and history, we cannot at all accept what is termed as human interference in the affairs of the country by way of the human rights issue. We have sufficient laws, regulations, and mechanisms as well as full commitment at the highest level of the state to the rights and freedoms of citizens; we have a society which does not accept insults. This society does not need any foreign help, care, or trusteeship with regard to the defense of its freedom and fundamental rights.

[Chaban] But the citizen is exposed to dangers to his life or to his possessions, to the violation of his rights.

[Bara] True.

[Chaban] How does the group see the issue of human rights in Algeria?

[Bara] At any rate, [words indistinct] this report is the second report to be issued by the National Human

Rights Monitoring Group. But to answer your question, we say that perhaps there are two parts. The first part is that in the view of the National Human Rights Monitoring Group the terrorist crimes and the indiscriminate violence and the savage operations being carried out by the armed groups and gangs against civilians without discriminating between old and young, peasant or worker, government official or trader, a Christian religious figure or an Imam, woman or man, both inside and outside the country are by far the most dangerous violation of citizens' rights and freedom.

Now we think that Algerian society, at all levels, is subjected to dangers with regard to its rights, freedoms, stability, and everyone should — individually or within the political or social organization to which he belongs — declare his own frank stance toward this situation. This has made Algeria live in a state of tension for the past few years. This has made the state take some (?difficult) measures within the framework of the so-called the state of siege, although we have noticed a certain reduction in these measures since the election of the president of the republic. These exceptional measures have led to the so-called excesses, and these do exist. We receive citizens' complaints daily; they send us letters; we have many documented cases in which citizens complain against violations of their fundamental rights, including the illegal arrest of individuals, exceeding the duration of precautionary detention, the illegal interrogation of citizens, and the illegal search of their properties; and we have what is termed as disappearance. We have cases of people coming to us to report that their brother or husband etc. has been arrested by certain services and we have not heard from them. We have also some cases relating to what is termed as suspect deaths. [passage omitted]

[Chaban] With regard to these cases — the excesses — if we compare previous years with 1995, have these cases increased or decreased?

[Barra] We should say that now we have a reaction from the authorities, from the various security services and from the Justice Ministry. We have a very quick reaction from them. At one time we used to get either no reaction or a somewhat slow reaction, but now, after having extended our scope and having correspondents throughout the homeland, and following the support we have received from the highest point of the state pyramid, we see that there are follow-ups; citizens can seek our help in order to follow up these cases, bearing in mind that in many cases the armed groups and the terrorist gangs themselves violate human rights and try to implicate others. [passage omitted]

[Chaban] Mr. Rezzag Bara, one last question: a few days ago, the president of the republic appointed the republic mediator and, no doubt, he will serve as a strong support for your work. What is the nature of relations between the group and the mediator, and how do you intend to benefit from him to entrench the rule of law?

[Barra] We note first that the mediator is a well-known figure who is sincere to this homeland; he is a wise and rational man, as we say here. We will seek his judgement with regard to all issues. We congratulate him on his appointment. This apparatus — this body — mediation is one of the bodies known in our society — it used to be called the Office of Complaints. [passage omitted]

[Chaban] One personal question, Mr. Rezzag Bara: What is your feeling when you receive every care and and every response from the president of the republic to the work you carry out?

[Bara] Satisfaction and pride; because the issue of human rights has been served by many people for a long time now in Algeria. Now we note that at the official and presidential levels the state cares for this issue. Yesterday, when we talked about the issues of human rights, the president of the republic stressed the need to educate the generations about human rights and tolerance. [passage omitted]

Egypt

Egypt: Musa Report to Mubarak on Libya Visit Thanks al-Qadhdhafi

NC2903112496 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1104 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 29 Mar (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa today handed a report to President Husni Mubarak on his visit to Libya yesterday during which he delivered a message from President Husni Mubarak to Libyan President Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi on bilateral relations and the situation in the Arab world.

In his report 'Amr Musa thanked President al-Qadhdhafi for the Libyan authorities' efforts in securing the safety of the hijacked Egyptian airliner and providing comfort to its passengers.

Egypt: Papers Call On al-Qadhdhafi To Hand Over Hijackers

NC2903080596 Cairo MENA in Arabic
0600 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 29 Mar (MENA)—AL-AKHBAR and AL-JUMHURIYAH call on Libyan revolution leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi to hand over the hijackers of the Egyptair plane in fulfillment of the agreement signed with Egypt.

AL-AKHBAR Chief Editor Jalal Duwaydar writes in the paper today that this step by Col. al-Qadhdhafi will confirm, first, his concern for Egyptian interests, which are the same as Libyan interests, and second, his rejection of terrorist actions.

He added: What happened was not a minor incident; the case should not be closed. No one should say that those who carried out the hijacking were criminals or addicted to hallucinogens. There must be an investigation to reveal all the circumstances and reasons. Its findings must come out in an official and comprehensive statement that quenches public thirst for knowledge and calms its rage.

The writer goes on to say: The choice of Luxor for this criminal act confirms that the perpetrators were in full possession of their mental powers and that their objective was to damage Egypt's stability and security. He adds: There is no argument that they chose this flight because they knew most of its passengers were tourists. This means they were plotting against the busy tourist season in Egypt.

Samir Rajab, the chairman of AL-JUMHURIYAH's board of directors, writes in his daily column in the paper: People in Egypt were dismayed by the hijacking. The hijackers have no cause and certainly do not know the language of politics. One is only 16 and another 14, which means that this was "child's play," a game that unfortunately became an incident.

He adds: I believe the oldest of the three hijackers was out of his head on drugs and thus committed this idiotic act without motive and without knowing the objective. What makes you wonder is this: Hijacks have recently receded worldwide, so what made him remember such a possibility now, when the whole world is taking a firm and decisive stand against terrorism?

Rajab goes on to say: Another thing showing that the members of this "gang of minors" are ignorant of everything that is going on is that they chose to land in Libya, which is under economic sanctions by the international community for refusing to hand over two nationals accused of involvement in blowing up a civilian airliner. It has no choice, therefore, but to return the gang members to Egypt so as to remove from itself any suspicions that it supports terrorism or backs terrorists.

Egypt: Al-Sharif Cites Mubarak's Remarks to Arab Journalists

NC2803154496 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1245 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Remarks by Egyptian Information Minister Safwat al-Sharif citing President Mubarak's remarks at a meeting with Arab journalists in Cairo on 28 March—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] President Mubarak met this morning with the heads of delegations taking part in the meetings of the Arab Journalists Union, the new chairman of the union and his deputies.

The president dealt with a number of topics and answered many questions posed by press doyens and heads of delegations.

He underlined the need for united Arab action at the political, economic, cultural, and media levels. He also underlined the role the union and the Arab media and press should play in uniting the Arab ranks, consolidating Arab action, and restoring the unity of the ranks to the Arab nation to enable it to cope with challenges under rapid changes in the world.

The president stressed the need for united economic action so that the Arab nation can assume a proper status in the world with the current economic changes. [passage omitted]

President Mubarak appealed to the Arab media to respect genuine Arab values and traditions, pointing out that a good word always provides a favorable climate for dialogue among different people and that an insolent word always divides and creates a schism in the various communities.

He stressed the need to respect the press' code of honor which maintains the respectability of journalists and the sacred nature of the profession and protects the rights of the community and its members. [passage omitted]

The president replied to a question by the head of the Syrian delegation about his call to free the area of weapons of mass destruction. He pointed out that efforts are continuing and that there is a determination to free the region of all weapons of mass destruction. He said that he will continue to make efforts at the Arab and African levels to reach this goal and preserve the people's interests. He said that new concepts that stress peace for the sake of development must be established.

Replying to a question by the head of the Palestinian delegation on the obstacles hindering the peace process, the president affirmed that the wheel of peace has been set in motion and that no power can stop it. He pointed out that the peacemakers summit in Sharm al-Shaykh centered world attention on the obstacles hampering the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Asked about Arab reconciliation, President Mubarak said that he is making all possible efforts to reconcile Arabs. He stressed the need to provide a favorable atmosphere and initiate a dialogue among brothers to prepare the way for this reconciliation. He remarked that Arab conciliation serves the Arab world and stressed that Arab media must play a role in creating that favorable atmosphere. Writers can criticize policies but they cannot level accusations. We respect each other, he said, adding that we should respect Arab traditions and values when we address the people or their leaders. [passage omitted]

Asked about the possibility of holding an Arab summit, he replied that this requires preparation and a favorable climate. He added that Arab differences must be settled at a bilateral level. This entails a responsibility for the Arab press, he said. [passage omitted]

Asked about the meeting of experts in Washington, President Mubarak replied that the meeting is committed to the letter to the resolutions and recommendations the leaders made at the peacemakers summit.

Touching on cooperation between Egypt and the Gulf states in the field of terrorism, the president noted that Egypt cooperates with all Gulf states by exchanging information among the security agencies. Egypt offers all help to bring about internal stability. But we do not interfere in the affairs of Arab brothers and we do not hesitate to provide every assistance that enhances stability. Egypt always brings the views of the various parties closer together whenever there is a dispute and whenever it is asked to do this, he said. [passage omitted]

The president was asked about Egypt's position toward the European states that harbor terrorists and whether Sharm al-Shaykh produced new stances in these states. He pointed out that since 1986 he has warned against the spread of terrorism. He warned at that time that terrorism would become an international phenomenon if it were not nipped in the bud. It has been proved to the world that terrorism is an international and not an Arab or Islamic phenomenon. It is a phenomenon that has no religion or homeland, he remarked, pointing out that the entire world has been subjected to different forms of terrorism. He recalled his warnings to the states that harbor terrorists and grant asylum to them. He said that they will suffer.

President Mubarak emphasized that Egypt is against the Iranian presence in the United Arab Emirates's islands of Abu Musa. He said that Egypt also is trying to resolve the Eritrean-Yemeni dispute without having to use force. He pointed out that Egypt believes in peaceful solutions. [passage omitted]

Touching on the reported nuclear leak from Dimona, the president said that Egypt is closely following the situation and is compiling accurate data and information. If these reports are true, it is a serious situation that requires certain measures to avert a catastrophe in the region. [passage omitted]

Egypt: Paper—Clinton's Support for Israel May Kill Peace Process

NC2803175496 Cairo AL-JUMHURIYAH in Arabic 23 Mar 96 p 16

["From the Keyhole" column by Kamil Zuhayri]

[FBIS Translated Text] No matter what spotlight the peace meetings receive, no matter what Hollywood-style direction they get, and no matter what strong rhetoric Shim'on Peres uses in his speeches about the promised peace and the new Middle East, this peace will remain fragile and incomplete. And it will remain dark, lighted from time to time only by the glow of suicide bombings in the occupied territories or in the Israeli-occupied strip in southern Lebanon.

This is the problem, as it has always been. Israel adheres to the theory of peace based, first and foremost, on security. It wants, and it can, impose this security by force alone. And the Israeli opposition is demanding that Israel's security be imposed beyond Israel's border, and by force alone.

After engaging in secret talks in Oslo and signing a peace agreements with Israel, Yasir 'Arafat became one of the hostages of peace. He is shouldering the responsibility of a state without having a state. He has to search for, arrest, and hand over suspects. 'Arafat also has to stick his fingers in his ears so as not to hear the sound of revenge explosions—the demolition, within moments, of the house of engineer Yahya 'Ayyash's family. The Israeli television showed the house standing intact and, moments later, a heap of stone. The supreme Israeli court ruled against the demolition decision, but the authorities proceeded with it. So the court stopped opposing the demolition of houses belonging to other suspects and convicts. Israel took revenge and imposed collective punishment in accordance with the Israeli security theory. Then there was the sudden explosion in the occupied border strip in southern Lebanon. Israel, as always, may take collective revenge with raids inside Lebanon now or in the future.

The Arab-Israeli conflict will continue to rage as long as Israel continues to adhere to peace based on security rather than to peace based on justice, as the Arabs want it to be. The vicious circle will continue as long as Israel gives security precedence over justice. U.S. President Bill Clinton's judgments that security for Israel is a necessity will not help. Indeed, these judgments by the sponsor of peace process may encourage Israel to kill peace. Even if the United States keeps its word of maintaining Israel's quantitative and qualitative superiority — a promise made since the days of Kissinger and Begin — and as long as the occupation continues, this absolute weapon of bombings and suicide will remain. And as long as Israel sticks to the theory of absolute security, peace will remain fragile and gloomy, and the talk about peace will remain merely talk.

Egypt: Paper Calls For Immediate Lifting of Israeli 'Siege'

NC2903080496 Cairo MENA in Arabic
0605 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 29 Mar (MENA) — AL-AHRAM describes Egypt's stand on the peace process as the cornerstone for peaceful efforts that aim to attain a just and comprehensive solution that guarantees the Arab parties' legitimate rights and consolidates the bases for security and stability in the region.

In its editorial today, the paper says: Egypt, which stands firmly on the side of peace in the interest of all the parties in the region also believes in the need to protect the Palestinian people that have suffered for decades from the Israeli authorities' killings and arresting of people, destroying of homes, and confiscating of lands.

It stressed that Egypt's stand on Israel's acts of collective punishment against the Palestinians is clear and based on the need to immediately lift this siege and end the Palestinians' sufferings. It says that Egypt rejects the policy of collective punishment whose consequences would be extremely grave.

The paper warns that if Israel has the right to protect its security then this does not justify resorting to the policy of collective punishment, especially since the incidents have proven that violence is not limited to the Palestinians alone and that extremism does blatantly exist inside Israel's society. It says that protecting the peace process cannot be done by asking one party and not the other to carry out certain actions.

Egypt: Country Said Safe From Israeli Nuclear Contamination

NC2803200596 Cairo MENA in English
1945 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, March 28 (MENA)—An official source at the Egyptian Atomic Energy Agency has said that Egypt is safe from any nuclear contamination coming from Israel.

He told MENA that 90 percent of the winds blow in the direction from Egypt to Israel. This means that there is no danger to the Egyptian atmosphere, he pointed out.

As for subterranean waters, the source said that the direction of the water current runs from Egypt to Israel not the other way round. This also indicates that the Egyptian subterranean water near Israel is also safe.

He noted that Egyptian bodies concerned are closely monitoring any radioactive contamination.

A mission of scientists headed yesterday for the Egyptian common borders with Israel to monitor any increase in nuclear radiation, he added.

Libya

Libya: 'Militant Islamic Group' Claims Responsibility for Clashes

MM2803125396 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic
28 Mar 96 pp 1, 6

[Unattributed report: "Libya: Islamists Head for Mountains; Islamic Group Claims Responsibility for Confrontation" — quotation marks as published]

[FBIS Translated Text] London, AL-HAYAH — Tripoli issued yesterday further confirmation of the clashes that occurred in the Darnah area near Banghazi. However, Libyan authorities continue to say that the clashes involved drug smugglers.

Arab sources pointed out that the clashes took place with fugitive Islamists who had escaped from prison and others scattered throughout the area, and that Libyan authorities have reopened the coastal road leading to the border with Egypt, now that the Islamists have fled into the mountains.

A statement issued yesterday by 'Abdallah al-Sadiq, "amir of the Militant Islamic Group [al-jama'ah al-islamiyah al-muqatilah], gave an account of the incidents which occurred in the area. It said: "The Militant Islamic Group [MIG] — which has declared the jihad for God's cause against the apostate al-Qadhdhafi regime in Libya for the sake of defending the honor, property, and sanctity violated by the oppressive regime — happily and proudly announces the heroic and courageous confrontation staged by MIG fighters in the eastern area of Wadi al-Injil (20 km west of Darnah) against the agent security units, which were reinforced with units from the Armed Forces, as fierce fighting took place between the mujahidin and regime's agent forces.

The incidents started Tuesday 12 March 1996 when the agent security forces arrested brother Khalid al-Sha'iri, who was brutally tortured until he was forced to name one of the locations used by the mujahidin.

On Saturday 16 March the agent regular forces launched an attack on Wadi al-Injil, where the brother mujahidin were based. Fierce fighting ensued, but the agent regular forces failed to storm the place, since the heroic fighters put up a stiff resistance.

On Sunday 17 March the agent regular forces — reinforced with mechanized units, heavy weapons, and helicopters — launched a military attack, but they still could not storm the position. And before sunset Sunday the heroic fighters withdrew successfully, with God's help. So the agent regular forces entered the position, which was completely empty. They returned empty-handed.

The fighting resulted in the deaths of two officers, the first being a colonel who is believed to be Col. 'Isa Salih al-Bar'asi. He took part in the fighting and is still missing. As for the other officer, he is Captain 'Abdallah Sa'id al-Jibani, who worked for the military intelligence organ. Furthermore, 14 others were killed and an unspecified number of people were wounded.

World and Arab media services have reported on recent incidents in Libya in a manner that involved some errors and overlapping of information, since the number of those who escaped from prison is not 400 but no more than 16, and that was last month.

The MIG confirms the success — with God's help — of its plan in the confrontation with the regime, since, while it retreats tactically, it continues to conduct the confrontation strategically. These methods have begun to bear fruit over the past 10 months of confrontation.

The MIG urges all the people to support their mujahidin sons brothers and to unite with them for the sake of Islam. It also urges Muslims throughout the world to stand by our oppressed people in their jihad in order to remove the regime which has enslaved the Libyan people for 26 years.

Furthermore, the MIG stresses to the world and all the forces closely watching the battle in Libya that the future belongs to us, not the al-Qadhdhafi regime or other regimes, and they have to understand this reality lest they wrongly read the reality."

Libya: JANA Notes Egyptian Minister's Praise for Hijacking Help

LD2803150696 Tripoli JANA in English 1436 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, al-Rabie [March] 28, JAMAHIRIYAH NEWS AGENCY — Safwat al-Sharif the minister of information in the Arab Republic of Egypt announced that the Great Jamahiriyah played a major role in putting an end to the hijacking of the airliner, the destination of which was changed to the Great Jamahiriyah, and the Great Jamahiriyah succeeded in freeing all the passenger hostages.

In a statement transmitted by the Egyptian satellite network, Safwat al-Sharif said the Great Jamahiriyah had taken all necessary actions and measures to provide comfort for the passengers.

Sudan

Sudan: Al-Bashir Addresses Rally, Vows End to 'Sectarianism'

EA2803213196 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1300 GMT 27 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Staff Lieutenant General 'Umar al-Bashir, president of the Republic, has said that the people of Sudan are a people reconciled with themselves. He said the government's first priority was to bring about development and stability. Al-Bashir made the remarks this morning while addressing a huge mass rally organized by sons of the southern states in Khartoum state.

The president of the Republic stressed that the voter turnout, involving both southerners and northerners, had been unprecedented. He said there was no discrimination between the people of the single nation, adding that the victory of some southern candidates in the north was proof of this.

His excellency said those who rejected the peace option [word indistinct] the people, so as to trade in their name at the expense of the great national cause.

He said there would be no return to sectarianism and pluralism, which had weakened the state's respectability and its Armed Forces and inaugurated war. He stressed the government's serious endeavors to end the war and bring about peace. Lt. Gen 'Umar al-Bashir said the sons of the homeland were prepared to defend every inch of its territory. [passage omitted]

Bahrain

Bahrain: 3 Jailed Under New Antiviolence Laws

NC2803124996 Paris AFP in English
1214 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, March 28 (AFP)—Three Bahrainis were jailed for between five and 12 years for destroying property under tough new laws brought in to quell the political violence which has plagued the country for the past 16 months, an official source said Thursday [28 March].

The state security court sentenced Adil al-Tal, 23, to 12 years in prison and fined him 80,000 dollars on Wednesday for setting fire to two electricity generators and several houses in a riot in June, a government official said.

'Abbas Moftah and Abbas 'Abd-al Husayn 'Abdallah, 23 and 22, were both given five year sentences for setting fire to private properties, also in June.

The three are the first to be convicted under amendments to the country's laws brought in by the amir, Shaykh 'Isa Bin-Salman Al Khalifah, which do not allow a right of appeal.

"The trial was conducted in a fair manner and all three defendants were given access to a proper legal defence in accordance with the laws of Bahrain," said the official, who asked to remain anonymous.

"We cannot just sit back and do nothing when rioters are sowing the seeds of panic among the population and threatening the security of the country."

(The opposition Bahrain Freedom Movement [BFM] based in London condemned the sentences as "arbitrary and lacking in any legal foundation".)

Under the terms of the new amendments to the penal code "anybody found to have committed a crime linked to the anti-government protests will be automatically brought before the state security court and there will be no appeal against the sentence."

Official sources said the new measures were aimed at speeding up the cases of those involved in the disturbances and acting as "a persuasive deterrent to those involved in committing such crimes."

At least 21 people, including seven Bangladeshis and four policemen, have died in unrest in the past 16 months which has included bomb attacks in hotels and firebombings of restaurants.

Fresh protests erupted on Tuesday after the execution by firing squad of a man convicted of the murder of a policeman.

The protests are spearheaded by Shiites calling on the Sunni Muslim authorities to restore parliament, suspended since 1975, and to release prisoners.

Riot police broke up more demonstrations in Shiite districts on Wednesday night.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Ministry Warns Pilgrims Against Bringing Political Material

LD2803141496 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
0757 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Riyadh, 29 Mar — The Interior Ministry has made a statement about the fact that a number of brother pilgrims have been carrying books, pictures, and pamphlets of a political, propaganda, and indoctrinating character which are contrary to the spirit of the holy hajj.

The Ministry asserted that anyone caught carrying such banned material will receive a suitable punishment in accordance with the laws in force in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. There will be no leniency or mercy, the ministry added. The following is the text of the statement:

An important statement from the Ministry of Interior: God says in his holy book: "And proclaim the pilgrimage among men: They will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on accounts of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways. That they may witness the benefits (provided) for them, and celebrate the name of God, through the days appointed".

A happy occasion for all Muslims takes place at this time each year. The believers' hearts beat for it and they live it with their minds. The eyes look in the direction of God's holy mosque and of the holy places. In this atmosphere which is filled with ties of faith between the citizens of this country and their fellow Muslims from all corners of the globe, preparations for receiving God's guests begin and all efforts are made in accordance with the nobleness of the goal and the comers' pride, so as to create the appropriate atmosphere for the pilgrims of God's house who have travelled from all the corners of the globe prompted by pure intention and cherished hope.

Proceeding from the divine legislation of the concept of this religious rite, the sons of the Kingdom and its government appreciate the great difficulty and the effort exerted by their fellow Muslims to perform one of the rites of their perfect religion.

Therefore, they are all attempting to avail all that will assist the pilgrims to God's Holy Mosque to attain their goal and perform their rites in ease and prevent all that might affect the atmosphere of reverence and the rite they have come for, or hurt their feelings, brotherhood or their holy goal.

The Ministry has noticed that a number of brothers arriving have been carrying in good faith — which we hope, God willing, is in order to take advantage of this holy occasion — books, pictures, and pamphlets with a political, propaganda, or ideological purpose, which might influence some people or directly offend others in violation of the spirit of holy hajj.

For this reason, in accordance with instructions, the Interior Ministry would like to draw attention to the fact that such material is categorically forbidden.... It hopes that the guests of God's house will be given the opportunity to perform their rites in reverence and will not be distracted from performing what they originally came for.... In this respect, the Ministry would like to reiterate its hope that everybody will respect this as violators will be punished and sent back.

Furthermore, anyone caught carrying any banned material will receive a suitable and deterring punishment without any leniency or mercy in accordance with the laws in force in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia... as it is the responsibility of the Ministry to look after the security of pilgrims and of citizens so that the Kingdom is an oasis of bliss and security for anyone coming here to visit God's holy house and the prophet's mosque.

Furthermore, in addition to its statement, the ministry would like to draw attention to the Almighty's words: "For Hajj are the months well known. If anyone undertakes that duty therein, let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj. And whatever good ye do, God knoweth it. And take a provision with you for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So far me, o ye that are wise."

God is our guide.

Saudi Arabia: Islamic Reform Movement Explains Origins

MM2803121196 London AL-ISLAH in Arabic 25 Mar 96

[Bulletin No. 2 issued by the Islamic Reform Movement, received by fax]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate.

"Who Are We?"

Those who are privy to the facts about the course of the awakening and who are familiar with the details of its important stages and the real conditions of those working in it know well that the Islamic Reform Movement [IRM] is only a natural extension of that course. Since those responsible for the movement represent the current which produced the plans for the awakening, indeed represent the principal cadre in producing those plans, it is not surprising if the work of the awakening remains within the context of these plans. The IRM program will of necessity be complementary to these plans.

So as to dot the i's and cross the t's and provide a clearer and more precise definition, we must explain the plans of the awakening itself and encourage the nation to form a picture of and understand every step taken by the awakening in the past, so that the nation is in a better position to contribute its ideas and advice on the awakening's future steps.

For this reason, we shall give in this issue of our bulletin a brief history of the course and explain our concepts in respect of each of its stages, which began with the letter of demands and ended with the formation of the Committee for Defense [of Legitimate Rights in Saudi Arabia, CDLR] and finally the establishment of the IRM.

The first nucleus of the league that produced the aforementioned plans came into being during the second Gulf war. In rallying together, members of this distinguished league were motivated by a sense of the Islamic current's political impotence despite the enormous capabilities this current mustered in terms of cadres and social base and despite the inherent stamina it possessed by virtue of historical and cultural considerations.

The league, which consisted of a number of university professors, students, and judges, was pained to see wrong prevail, although it is foreign to the Arabian Peninsula's society, and to see the retreat of right, although it is deeply entrenched in society and in the multitude of its men and protagonists. Following a profound study and lengthy considerations, the league came to the conclusion that many of the individuals, groups, and currents participating in the Islamic action and reform plans were incapable of coming out of their particular shells; even if they succeeded in performing a distinguished act, it was nothing more than a reaction and a response to events created by their opponents in order to preoccupy them and confine them to their shells.

Having reached this conclusion, the league deemed it necessary to put forward a "long-term" strategic plan based on three points: (1) clear definition of objectives including both strategic and phased objectives; (2) precise self-knowledge — here the word "self" does not mean just this small league, but all forces considered to belong to the Islamic currents; (3) precise and detailed understanding of the environment in which the said plan will be implemented, the local and international conditions that surround it, and the factors that influence the plans positively or negatively.

It must be confessed, however, that the league did not possess the necessary tools to satisfy the aforementioned major points. However, the league's adherence to scientific methods enabled it to exploit its distinguished relations in gathering the largest possible amount of information in order to find an appropriate basis for that strategy. It then became possible to come up with a detailed vision of the priorities of the stage, the form the program should take, and what the first step should be.

Once it had a clear picture, the league's main concern was to bring about a qualitative change in the social environment and a genuine change in the people's way of thinking with regard to sensitive issues such as religion, ulemas, politics, and rulers, and to eliminate a large part of the wrong ideas that crammed people's minds, as well as the pre-Islamic traditions that were cloaked in Islamic attire. To achieve this aim, it was necessary to concentrate in the first stage on ensuring that this mission would reach the people in an effective and influential manner which would do away with the old wrong convictions and replace them with sound and legitimate convictions.

That prerequisite was actually realized in the letter of demands which was prepared, signed, and delivered, and published later, after the Gulf war. It was the forerunner of the many successful political plans drawn up by the league.

The philosophy of the letter was based on the idea of putting forward a practical model and preparing to face all the consequences and shoulder all responsibilities. This is because the drafters of the letter were not convinced by the mere idea of offering advice and letters to the nation with a view to rectifying its understanding and convictions, but sought rather to provide a practical model which the nation could use as an example to be followed.

Hence the formulation of a large number of demands on which all factions of the nation would agree and which a large number of Islamic leaders would adopt. After that, the nation would be acquainted with the letter and the names of those who signed it.

The planned letter of demands succeeded in realizing the desired objectives, as the people became convinced that the Islamists were demanding the realization of the people's rights, that they had put forward a large number of comprehensive demands, and that all the Islamic leaderships were in agreement over these demands.

Following its publication and the masses' delight at its publication, the letter of demands succeeded in dealing a blow to a bad tradition that had hitherto been above all suspicion, namely that advice should always be engulfed in secrecy. The publication of the letter of demands debunked that erroneous conviction.

Like the steps that followed it, the letter succeeded in setting a model for benefiting from social conditions and utilizing them to serve the Islamic plan. Furthermore, it was proof that with a little thinking and a strategic outlook, one can look for the many available opportunities and utilize them for the good of Islam.

Following the success of the letter of demands, it was necessary to fulfill the task of ensuring that the letter would reach the nation. The league which drafted the letter was of the opinion that changing people's convictions must be followed up by a detailed presentation of the reform program, thus ensuring the realization of the remaining objectives of the letter, which were as follows: (1) to provide convincing arguments against the regime and the religious institutions that are considered to belong to it; and (2) to prove the Islamists' ability to put forward a detailed, original, practical, and realistic program and thus debunk the claims of those who accuse the Islamists of only raising slogans and placards. Indeed, such claims were circulated following the publication of the letter of demands in an attempt to weaken the Islamists' position after the letter's success.

The same league succeeded, with the help of students and university professors, in realizing the objectives of its second plan which was known as the "Memorandum of Advice"; this, according to a league of senior Islamist thinkers, was classed as one of the best letters ever written about reform programs in such a legitimate, effective, practical, and realistic manner.

Prior to the preparation of the Memorandum of Advice, the league embarked on a campaign to pave the way for it through the preparation of a recorded tape explaining the contents of the ulemas' letter [of demands] and replying to mistaken concepts in a detailed manner. The tape was circulated under the title "The Unmasking of Darkness," as well as under the title of "The Giant Gun" in glorification of its contents. While the tape was a semi-secret action, the Memorandum of Advice was an open and public action and was signed by over 100 learned men, university professors, judges, and members of the intelligentsia. We believe the objective behind the preparation of this Memorandum of Advice was accomplished when the nation became familiar with its contents and convincing evidence was provided, through its legitimate and realistic presentation, about the regime's insistence on and persistence in refusing all demands for reform, and also in the light of its compatibility with legitimacy and its applicability.

Following the ulemas' letter and the Memorandum of Advice, it became evident that the letter's objective had been fulfilled and that despite the merits of such letters, no further qualitative progress would be possible and anything else would be a mere repetition. So the league felt that there was an opportunity to put forward a practical model for legitimate entities. To implement this idea, it was necessary to choose a legitimate framework, such that nobody could dispute its legitimacy, with or without the permission of the ruler.

In view of the fact that cooperation in lifting injustices could constitute an appropriate framework for the materialization of this fact, and in view of the league's concern not to arouse any conflict despite their conviction of the legitimacy of establishing entities under the umbrella of cooperation in denouncing evil, nepotism, and other such matters, the lifting of injustices was considered the most acceptable and least likely to arouse conflicts. Hence the plan to form the "Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights."

What was needed in reality was not merely the lifting of injustices but the putting forward of a model to the nation showing that it is possible for the Muslim to cooperate with his brother Muslim within a legitimate entity for the realization of legitimate objectives. The required change in people's consciences and minds was more important than the success of the aforementioned committee in lifting one or more injustices, which is not on the cards in dealings with a regime like that in our country. For this reason, the first priority was directed toward informing the nation about the committee's formation and acquainting it with the contents of the committee's statement on its establishment. This was actually accomplished following the drafting of the statement of establishment in a legitimate and precise form which the official ulemas themselves admitted to be sound and precise and which was signed by a number of well-known personalities including judges, lawyers, and university professors. Subsequent events inflamed matters politically and a large media campaign was utilized for this purpose. Then came the first campaign of arrests of well-known Islamic personalities by the regime. The regime had hitherto tried to present itself as not being hostile to well-known social personalities.

Following the above mentioned campaign and after the regime had decided to do away with any remaining vestiges of freedom, the opportunity presented itself for embarking on a new stage which the league had previously tried to avoid. In the past, the league had rejected any idea of external action so that it could not be said to be rushing to operate abroad before it had exploited all opportunities for action from within. But since the regime had shut all doors to any freedom of action, operating from outside the regime's walls and its sphere of influence became fully justified, and only an arrogant philosopher could argue with that.

Thus it was decided to move to London and utilize to the full the free environment that exists there so that the league could carry out its task on a permanent basis, whereas it had hitherto been operating on a seasonal basis and according to circumstances.

When the CDLR's London office was established, it could not absorb the entire reform plan and its work was not the same as the Islamic work it used to perform in the Arabian Peninsula. The CDLR's London Bureau considered itself an information arm for conveying the voice of its leaders and disseminating the facts about them and about the regime to the whole world, utilizing for the purpose the opportunities that exist, in the atmosphere of freedom, for doing what could not be done under conditions of oppression and tyranny.

After the establishment of the committee's London Bureau, many events befell the Islamic action; the most important of these were the events at Buraydah, which caused relations between the ruler and the ruled to deteriorate into a bad state of mistrust and siege, imposing on the Islamists a new method of operation based on an enormous change of attitude toward the regime.

Then came the recent events which led to the formation of the Islamic Reform Movement, which we hope, God willing, will amount to a serious return to the long march and the completion of the raising of the banner that was raised with the letter of demands.

That was the past and that is the explanation of its events. Next time we will talk about the characteristics of the course, its method, and its policies, which are in fact the true characteristics, methods, and policies of the IRM. After that, we will talk about various aspects of our evaluation of existing conditions and our hopes for the future.

We will place all that before the nation, awaiting true participation by students, the intelligentsia, and thinkers with their ideas and advice so that we may include them, God willing, in our political program and future plan. Perhaps our brothers realize how essential such participation is and how serious any dereliction in this regard would be.

No Comment and No Statements

The IRM wishes to affirm again that all statements or utterances attributed by the press to Dr. Sa'd al-Faqih [the IRM leader] and all reports of his leaking personal letters and messages are totally unfounded.

The IRM also affirms that it is fully committed to the course it has pledged itself to, namely, not to utter any statements about the question of the dispute, particularly to the newspapers which are considered to belong to the regime. One newspaper published parts of last week's bulletin in such a way as to give the impression that it was a statement exclusively made to it. We request everyone to be on their guard and not to be taken in by the ruses of the biased and those who lie in wait for the movement.

Means of Safe Contact

Thank God, a network for making safe contact with the IRM has been established as follows:

(1) Telephone contact: (a) Dial 180011 on the MCI network, (b) following the first recorded message, dial the following card number: 202-628-5610-2990; (c) following the second recorded message, dial the telephone number: 202-628-5610.

(2) FAX Contact: (a) dial 180011 on the MCI network, (b) following the first recorded message, dial card number 202-628-5611-2990, (c) following the second recorded message, dial the telephone number: 202-628-5611.

Please note that there are two cards, one for the telephone which carries the same number as the telephone number plus 2990, while the other carries the fax number plus 2990.

The two above mentioned cards can also be used with the AT&T network via number 1800100 and the Sprint network via number 180015.

Please note the difference between the companies in the order of numbers on the cards and the telephones in respect of the recorded messages.

Brothers outside the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] can contact us directly on the following London numbers: telephone: 44-181-451-3244; fax: 44-181-451-3255.

Yemen

Yemen: Socialist Party's Umar on Political Developments

MM2803124696 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 27 Mar 96 p 4

[Interview with Jarallah 'Umar, member of the YSP who has recently returned to Yemen, by Faysal Makram in Sanaa; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Makram] How did you leave the country and how did you return? Did the government stipulate any conditions for your return?

['Umar] We left for Cairo via al-Mukalla during the war, and returned from Cairo to Sanaa in mid-January 1996. This was of my own free will. Do you have a question about the future?

[Makram] What responsibilities were you given in the [Yemeni] Socialist Party [YSP] after your return?

['Umar] I did not hold a specific post in the YSP. Instead, I was the culture minister. I am now working in the Political Department, a task assigned by the party's leadership.

[Makram] What about the YSP's position in the opposition after the war which resulted in its removal from power?

['Umar] Personally, I am entirely satisfied with the party being in opposition. This makes it closer to the people and more aware of their needs. One of the objectives of the YSP being in the opposition is to help establish an opposition with suitable political traditions and experience.

I suggested that the YSP join the opposition before the war, and was hoping that it would then. My only comment in this context is that I would have liked the YSP to join the opposition, but not in the way it happened.

[Makram] Does the YSP accept responsibility for its leaders' approach to the political crisis which progressed toward war and later secession?

['Umar] I was looking forward to your questions about the future, as this is what matters now for Yemen. Let us look ahead, because the year 2000 is not far away. What will we do then?

[Makram] Is the past not the basis of the future, even if it is only to learn from experience and determine responsibilities?

['Umar] Yes, but we attach too much importance to the past.

[Makram] It is normal to talk about the past, because it is near, and its events play a part in the variables of the present and perhaps the future.

['Umar] That is the historian's task.

[Makram] Can I ask you about the YSP's relations with the opposition abroad, like the MAWJ [Yemeni National Opposition Front] for example, or is this to do with the past?

['Umar] There are no relations. I mean that the YSP's leadership is in Sanaa under 'Ali Salih 'Abbad (Muqbil), and enjoys the support of all the party members. I believe that the party's activity concerns work inside Yemen.

[Makram] Are you not afraid that the current trying to make the YSP a representative of a half-entity called the "south" might prevail?

['Umar] The YSP is the heir to the oldest voluntary unions in the Yemeni nationalist movement. It is now the major voluntary union in the Yemeni arena, and can be found in Hadhramaut and al-Mahrah, as well as Ma'rib and Sa'dah. The YSP speaks on behalf of Yemen and acts as a Yemeni party.

[Makram] It has been said that the current which believes that the YSP represents "the south" was controlling the party and therefore decided, on behalf of the party, to secede during the war. Has this changed now?

['Umar] In wars, one can say anything.

[Makram] Do you believe that Yemen has recovered from the war and its aftermath?

['Umar] I believe that Yemen needs to try seriously to overcome the legacy of the war, such as the consequences which have harmed the Yemeni people, society, and environment.

[Makram] What is your view on the decision to secede, and who was responsible for this decision?

['Umar] The secession is over and there is no need to dwell on something which was still-born.

[Makram] How do you view the bilateral coalition government between the [General] People's Congress [GPC] and the [Yemeni] Reform Grouping [YRG] since the war ended?

['Umar] They were the ones who decided on the coalition and I have nothing to say. However, if you are asking me about its policies, then there are many I do not agree with.

[Makram] Which are the ones you do not agree with?

['Umar] Those concerning domestic policies, notably the restriction of the freedoms that existed before the war or during the interim phase, which was Yemen's spring. I do not agree with the economic policy which has harmed the standard of living of the limited-income group. I also do not agree with the coalition's policies on education. Generally, I support the YSP's views opposing the existing policies.

[Makram] What are your views now on the "Pledge and Accord Document"?

['Umar] I believe that, if viewed away from the conflict which took place, you will find that it is adequate for solving the country's problem, and there is consensus on it. I believe that the "Pledge and Accord Document" was, and still is, a historical way out of a historical crisis, and its implementation requires renewed understanding. It can only be implemented if all, or at least most, signatories are in agreement. It is still just an open invitation to anyone who agrees with it.

[Makram] Does the YSP consider the document an issue at this stage?

['Umar] The YSP has many issues, the most important being the removal of the consequences of the war.

[Makram] What are the priorities with regard to these consequences?

['Umar] There are many. They are listed in the statements of the YSP's Political Bureau and Central Committee. The most important is probably to restore the YSP to its prewar status, with the exception of its return to power.

[Makram] Would that include the return of the leaders on the list of 16 wanted men, on charges of no less than high treason?

['Umar] The list of 16 was issued by a political decision, and can be revoked by a political decision. Yemen has nothing to gain from having any of its sons in exile or wanted by justice. Any talk about a list makes the postwar general amnesty decision a partial amnesty. I hope that the list of 16 will be revoked soon, so that the amnesty becomes a general amnesty.

[Makram] How do you characterize the YSP's current relations with its leaders on the list of 16?

['Umar] Next question?

[Makram] There is talk about the YSP and its activities being illegal because it did not fulfill the conditions stipulated by the Political Parties' Affairs committee.

['Umar] The YSP exists as an ideology, a program, and people, and cannot be abolished or prolonged by just a decree. However, any government can restrict or ban the activities of any political party. I believe that this is just political legal bickering. I hope it will end, because the YSP was instrumental in establishing the state on 22 May 1990.

[Makram] In your view, has the YSP benefited from past experience, namely the crisis which led to the war?

['Umar] It is too early to answer this question, because the YSP has not even been allowed to think freely about what happened.

[Makram] Is it true that the YSP is illegal, since it did not hold its fourth general congress and does not have a political program?

['Umar] There is a program which was decided by the Central Committee, and there is a Political Bureau which was elected by the Central Committee. With regard to organizational issues, the YSP's affairs are conducted normally, and when the party's situation is normalized, its headquarters and funds are returned, and at least most of its members who are abroad return, then a general congress will be meaningful. Any YSP general congress without these conditions would be less representative.

[Makram] How do you view the current dialogue between the YSP and the GPC?

['Umar] The dialogue is normal and includes a frank and friendly discussion between the two parties with regard to the YSP's situation and the possibility of it being treated normally, in accordance with the constitution, the law, and the ruling coalition's stated postwar policies. The dialogue has also touched on the YSP's future relations with the GPC, the upcoming elections, and the country's future in general. Needless to say, it is not directed against anyone.

[Makram] Did any outside quarters or pressures intervene for holding such a dialogue?

['Umar] Again, can we move on to the next question?

[Makram] Why was the dialogue postponed until now?

['Umar] This question should be addressed to the GPC, because the YSP was always ready for dialogue.

[Makram] Is there a specific political deal behind the dialogue between the YSP and the GPC?

['Umar] Anybody can interpret events the way they want.

[Makram] As far as the YSP is concerned, is a dialogue with the other government coalition partner, the YRG, on the cards?

['Umar] The YSP is entirely ready for dialogue with the YRG, because the YRG is a major party in the Yemeni arena and the political and democratic process in Yemen cannot be conducted without an understanding, a dialogue, and normal relations with a party like the YRG. I believe that the time has come for the Yemeni parties in the coalition and the opposition to come to terms again.

[Makram] What do you mean by come to terms?

['Umar] For example, to move Yemen from a state of conflict to peaceful competition and to remove entirely from our minds, consciousness, and daily and weekly plans the use or thought of violence to solve any of the problems related to the exercise of power.

We Yemenis have had 1,000 years of the civil war culture, but we must try to move on to a peaceful culture. Without this, I do not believe that there will be stability, progress, or coexistence. With regard to the YRG, it is very important that it accepts others and behaves like a political party.

Iraq: Spokesman Criticizes Plans for U.S. Team Visit to North

JN2903102596 Baghdad INA in Arabic
0810 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 29 Mar (INA) — Iraq categorically condemned U.S. interference in northern Iraq as the main cause of complicating the situation and driving it to a tragic end that will have deeply negative repercussions for the Kurdish people.

Iraq's condemnation came in a statement by a Foreign Ministry spokesman to INA today. The spokesman was reacting to statements—carried by news agencies on 28 March and attributed to the Turkish Foreign Ministry—to the effect that the so-called Robert Deutsch, director of the Northern Gulf Affairs Desk in the U.S. State Department, is preparing to come to northern Iraq at the head of a so-called American delegation tasked to end the fighting among conflicting cliques there.

The spokesman reaffirmed the Iraqi Government's astonishment and condemnation of these American practices, which are part of a continuous series of hostilities against and interference in Iraq's domestic affairs. These practices serve the hostile schemes against Iraq, with its Arab and Kurdish people; maintain control on Washington's agents there; perpetuate the abnormal situation in northern Iraq; and prevent the Kurdish parties from returning to the national ranks.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman noted: The experiment that began in 1991 emphasized beyond doubt that the presence of the so-called American Hammer Force in Turkey is nothing more than a cover to devise plots against Iraq, threaten its sovereignty and national unity, and perpetuate the unjust embargo against it. The continuation of the suspicious presence of these troops created conditions that are worrying even to Turkey itself, where voices have started to rise in their demands for an end to the presence of the aforementioned troops.

He added: Everyone knows that the most prominent cause of the deterioration in the security, the political situation, and the living conditions in northern Iraq is foreign interference, particularly by the United States, in the affairs of this region. This interference is the major cause of complicating the situation there and driving it to a tragic end. This will have deeply negative repercussions on all aspects of the daily life of the Kurdish people in the self-rule areas.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman concluded his statement by saying: The Government of the Republic of Iraq categorically condemns this hostile policy against Iraq. It reiterates that the only means to address the deterioration of conditions in northern Iraq and reinstate law, stability, and normal life is by halting this foreign interference, so that the state authority can prevail under the unity and sovereignty of Iraq in a manner that ensures stability and security for the great Iraqi people.

Iraq: Alleged CIA Involvement in Car Bombings Protested to UN

JN2903100996 Baghdad INA in Arabic
0845 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 29 Mar (INA)—Iraq apprised the United Nations of statements made by a CIA agent, who confessed to masterminding car bomb explosions in Baghdad, Salah-al-Din, and elsewhere in Iraq at the behest of the CIA.

In a letter to UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali, 'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abd-al-Ghafur, minister of culture and information and acting minister of foreign affairs, said that these confessions reconfirm the involvement of official U.S. agencies in flagrant terrorist operations against the Iraqi people and their espousal of such operations in a desperate bid to disturb security and stability in Iraq.

The following is the text of the letter:

Your Excellency Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali, secretary general of the United Nations, New York.

Your Excellency:

I would like to draw your attention to an article published in the 26 March edition of British newspaper THE INDEPENDENT by correspondent Patrick Cockburn. In this article, the correspondent quotes statements made by a CIA agent in which he confesses to masterminding car bomb explosions in the cities of Baghdad, Salah-al-Din, and elsewhere in Iraq at the behest of the CIA.

This information reconfirms the involvement of official U.S. agencies in flagrant terrorist operations against the Iraqi people, and their espousal of such operations in a desperate bid to disturb security and stability in Iraq and interfere in its domestic affairs. This behavior, which is aimed at hurting Iraq's national authority, belies beyond any shadow of doubt the falsehoods and allegations promoted by the U.S. Administration when it claims that it is working to combat and eliminate terrorism everywhere. Meanwhile, this administration masterminds terrorist and outrageous operations against the lofty Iraqi people. This raises important questions about the credibility of a superpower and a permanent member of the Security Council, particularly since this superpower has professed to be a champion of human rights and international law.

Mr. Secretary General: I am pleased to send you a copy of this article. I ask that you circulate it among UN members as an official document of the Security Council.

Please accept my regards.

[Signed] 'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abd-al-Ghafur,
Acting minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Iraq
[Dated] 28 March 1996

Iraq: Authorities Arrest Kuwaiti 'Agents' Planning 'Sabotage'

JN2903121996 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0920 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 29 Mar (INA) — The competent Iraqi authorities managed to arrest a group of people recruited by Kuwaiti Intelligence to carry out acts of sabotage against Iraq's security and the UN observers deployed on the Iraq-Kuwait border.

The agents were identified as Zaghir 'Abbud Muhammad, 'Ali Kamil Yasir, Rasul Ni'mah Faraj, Mahmud Dawud Salman, 'Ali Ja'az Shandi, and 'Adil 'Ulwan Liftah. In a program shown on Iraq Television last night, these agents admitted that they had been recruited by Kuwaiti Intelligence to carry out espionage activities on the cargo of ships bound for Umm Qasr Port and to collect information about the economic situation in Iraq.

Agent Zaghir 'Abbud Muhammad confessed that he was recruited by a Kuwaiti intelligence officer of Iranian origin called Muhammad Yusuf al-Kundari, who first asked him to work at a commercial company based in Amman and used by Kuwaiti Intelligence.

This agent also confessed that he and his group received weapons from the Kuwaiti authorities to carry out operations against UN observers on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border to hold Iraq responsible.

Agent 'Ali Kamil Yasir confessed that he had collected fingerprints from several Iraqi citizens and told the Kuwaiti authorities that they belong to missing Kuwaitis who are detained in Iraq to achieve material gains.

The agents also confessed that Kuwaiti and U.S. Intelligence asked them, while they were in Kuwait, to collect information about the deployment and movements of the Republican Guard and its weapons.

The agents said they relayed messages to and from Kuwaiti Intelligence containing instructions about the missions they should carry out inside Iraq. The agents also admitted that the information required of them was not confined to what was mentioned above, but also included reports on the Health Ministry and the Chamber of Commerce.

Iraq: Explosion in al-Nasiriyah Governorate Building Reported

NC2803161496 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Islamic Revolution in Arabic 1440 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A huge explosion rocked the building housing the al-Nasiriyah Governorate in southern Iraq. A statement issued by the mujahidin of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq noted that an explosion, resulting from an explosive device that had been planted by our heroic strugglers, destroyed the front wall of the governorate building, the guards room, and smashed the windows of nearby buildings.

Iraq: Foreign Minister Views Ties to Egypt, China, UN

NC2803154896 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1200 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Beijing, 28 Mar (MENA)—Iraqi Foreign Minister Muhammad Sa'id al-Sahhaf voiced Iraq's appreciation to the Egyptian people and President Husni Mubarak for their efforts to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people. Al-Sahhaf expressed satisfaction at the progress in relations between Egypt and Iraq in terms of bilateral cooperation, solidarity, and coordination within the framework of common Arab action.

In an interview with MENA correspondent in Beijing today, al-Sahhaf noted that Iraq backs President Mubarak's efforts to achieve Arab reconciliation and accord. He added that Egypt and Iraq are working earnestly with a number of Arab states to exert sincere efforts for Arab rapprochement and turn the page on the past, in the interest of inter-Arab unity.

Asked about his meeting last night in Beijing with UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus-Ghali, al-Sahhaf said the meeting dealt with two issues. First, to create a suitable atmosphere for working out an agreement that can be concluded around 8 or 9 April in New York, under the supervision of Dr. Butrus-Ghali. He added that he and the secretary general are optimistic about the success of the talks to reach an agreement allowing Iraq to sell $2 billion worth of Iraqi oil over the coming six months, in order to buy the basic necessities for the Iraqi people, such as food, medicines, agricultural and irrigation equipment, and other humanitarian needs. Al-Sahhaf added that he had explained to Dr. Butrus-Ghali Iraq's firm stance in cooperating with the UN to close the outstanding files related to the Security Council resolutions. He added that his country will continue to do what it is required to do under the international resolutions to consolidate its cooperation with the UN Sanctions Committee. Al-Sahhaf added that he had explained to Dr. Butrus-Ghali what has been accomplished and details of the measures that will be adopted to implement these resolutions. He noted that there are no obstacles preventing the implementation of these resolutions. Al-Sahhaf described the meeting as marked by amity and respect for the secretary general.

The Iraqi foreign minister voiced support for President Mubarak's proposal to turn the Middle East into a zone free of nuclear weapons.

The Iraqi minister denied the presence of any Kuwaiti prisoners in Iraq. He was replying to a question on whether the hand over of Kuwaiti prisoners would help achieve Arab reconciliation and unify Arab ranks.

Asked about prospects for a reconciliation with Israel, should Syria and Lebanon conclude peace agreements with Israel, al-Sahhaf said that every country acts according to its own interests, which it knows best.

The Iraqi minister described the economic embargo on Iraq as an unjust embargo, causing suffering for Iraqi children, elderly, and sick people. He added that the embargo runs counter to all international and humanitarian customs. The suffering, he noted, has prompted several countries to call for reconsidering the use of sanctions as a tool to punish countries, adding that it is the people alone who suffer. Among these countries, he added, are China, France, and Russia, whose foreign minister has called in a written message to the UN for reconsidering the use of embargo among the tools for punishing people, noting that it has become an unacceptable international policy.

Regarding Chinese-Iraqi relations and the debts Iraq owes to China, the Iraqi minister said that his country gives particular attention to its ties with China. He noted that Iraqi-Chinese relations are longstanding and governed by mutual interests. The two sides exchange views on all issues and have been maintaining close cooperation in the fields of technology, oil, agriculture, industry, economy, and trade, particularly in the past two days, during which the magnitude of bilateral cooperation increased, he added. He noted that in the past two days the two countries conducted a complete revision of their existing ties, some of which were organized in the form of agreements. Others are in the process of being organized to ensure that this cooperation is stable. He noted that Iraq always meets its obligations, be they debts or otherwise.

Iraq: Land Transport Company Meeting With Jordan Concludes Session

JN2803215596 Baghdad INA in Arabic
1145 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Baghdad, 28 Mar (INA) — The 31st session of the General Assembly of the Iraqi-Jordan Land Transport Company concluded here today.

The three-day session was chaired by 'Awad al-Tall, under secretary of the Jordanian Transport Ministry. The conferees approved the operational and financial reports for last year. The company's profits amounted to $4.5 million. This covers transport of goods, foodstuffs, and oil between the two fraternal countries by the company's fleet of trucks and tankers. The company has 350 trucks and tankers.

The conferees also approved the estimated budget of 1996 and its operational plan. The plan seeks to increase transport capacity from the Jordanian Gulf of 'Aqabah to Iraq, in addition to internal transport in both countries. [passage omitted]

Iraq: Hashemites, Jordan-Iraqi Relations Viewed

96LH0139A London AL-MAJALLAH in Arabic
7 Jan 96 pp 20-23

[Article by Salih Qallab: "Hashemites and Iraq; Jordanians: Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i Dispensed Formal Legal Opinion That 'Hashemites' Are Entitled to Iraq; 'Abd-al-Majid al-Khu'i: My Father Dispensed No Such Opinion, Which Is Fabricated; King Husayn Turned Down Offer Made by Some Iraqi Opposition Factions Urging That Prince Ra'd Ibn Zayd Assume Baghdad's Throne"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Up to nearly a year after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Jordanian-Iraqi relations had gone through a long honeymoon, which started with the collapse of the throne of Reza Mohammad Pahlavi, the ex-shah of Iran, in 1979 and lasted throughout the Iraq-Iran war. This war began in 1980 and ended after eight years during which King Husayn of Jordan visited Baghdad repeatedly and Jordan contributed to the Iraqi military effort in various ways and forms.

Many have viewed Jordan's alignment with Iraq in that devastating war as part of the mutual containment theory which the United States had begun to apply against Iran and Iraq and as something compatible with self-defense. However, others have held the belief that King Husayn took that position because he continued to feel bitter about the murder of all his family members in Iraq. Therefore, he encouraged Iraq's republican regime, which is considered an extension of the regime of 'Abd-al-Karim Qasim, who led the 1958 coup, to enter into that war, considering that it would be a costly and losing war.

An indication that these misgivings did perhaps occur in the Iraqi president's mind is that during one of the initial visits which King Husayn made to Iraq after eruption of the Iraq-Iran war, the president did comply with the Jordanian monarch's request to visit the royal cemetery in Baghdad, keeping in mind that this cemetery does not contain the body of the last Iraqi monarch from the Hashemite dynasty, namely King Faysal. This monarch, Prince 'Abd-al-Ilah Bin 'Ali, his maternal uncle, and most of their family members were killed and their bodies mutilated, and nobody knows where their two bodies and the other bodies are buried.

To further demonstrate his repudiation of the bloody 1958 coup and his goodwill toward King Husayn and to console him as much as possible, Saddam Husayn issued a decree prior to the Jordanian monarch's aforementioned visit calling for repairing and cleaning up the royal cemetery in Baghdad and for restoring it to its appropriate previous condition.

King Husayn understood the significance of this gesture and proceeded to join the war as if his country was a part of it. Throughout these years, he has shown no sign that he still contemplates the fact that a part of his family ruled this country and that this entire part was brutally massacred in a bloody coup on the charge of "being reactionary" and loyal to the west and the British Government.

However, it is certain that King Husayn, a man who is fond of heritage, history, genealogy, and lineage, never entered Baghdad on any morning or evening and never crossed the Iraqi border or airspace without feeling pain in his heart and without recalling that one day, less than a quarter century ago, he was the vice president of the Hashemite Union, which included Jordan and Iraq and whose throne was assumed by his cousin, Faysal Bin Ghazi Bin Faysal al-Husayn.

What is truly strange and interesting is that throughout these years the Iraqi president has hastened to say that he, too, is a Hashemite and a descendant of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib on the side of Fatimah, the prophet's daughter, may God's peace and prayers be upon the prophet. If sociologists and psychologists study this behavior, they will perhaps conclude that Saddam Husayn suffers from internal emptiness vis-a-vis King Husayn and that this is why he has resorted to making claims founded on no historical grounds.

Accord and Harmony

The important thing is that the issue of the Hashemite rule of Iraq did not affect the long honeymoon between Jordan and Iraq. This honeymoon followed many years of conflict from the time the Ba'th Party assumed power in Iraq in 1968—a conflict which reached the point where Iraqi authorities executed a number of Jordanian students on the pretext that they worked for the Jordanian intelligence. Relations with King Husayn continued to be firm and strong and kept on growing, but in his private sessions, the king expressed apprehension about his eastern neighbor's influence, which was growing unnecessarily. Moreover, the king has not been an admirer of Saddam Husayn's arrogance or of his method of government, which is predominantly bloody in nature.

If we want the truth while talking about this sensitive issue, then the Iraqis continued to be apprehensive deep inside about Jordanian infiltration of the Iraqi Armed Forces and about the recruitment of some of these officers in anticipation of a day when relations between the two countries would deteriorate. This is why they surrounded Iraqi officers' communication and contacts with Jordanian officers during mutual visits and in joint courses by very strict security measures that are absolutely unusual between friendly and sisterly countries.

Formal Legal Opinion

Shortly after the second Gulf war, King Husayn started to openly criticize the Iraqi president's individualism and his failure to listen to any voice other than his own.

In one of his recurrent visits to London, the Jordanian monarch received a delegation from the Kurdish movement that was engaged in a murderous war with the central government in Baghdad. Amidst the surprise of observers who were not watching developments closely and who were not familiar with the secrets behind the scenes, the monarch visited Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i Center —considered a most important Iraqi opposition center abroad — in Brondsbury [as transliterated] Park, in the British capital.

In the same period, and also during his presence in Britain, in London specifically, King Husayn received a Lebanese Shi'ite delegation led by Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, the Lebanese Supreme Shi'ite Council chairman. It is well known that Shaykh Shams-al-Din and a number of prominent Lebanese Shi'ite sect clerics emulated the Greater Ayatollah Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i and considered him their authority. They did not even recognize Khomeyni as the supreme authority for the world Shi'ites.

The connection that links King Husayn to Lebanon's Shi'ite clerics, including Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, is that the king considers Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i a descendent of the same line of 'Ali to which he, the king, belongs. One time after the war, the king described al-Khu'i as his relative and cousin.

Reports circulated in Jordanian political circles assert that throughout three decades, Abu-al-Qasim continued to advocate secretly the return of the Hashemite dynasty to the rule. In this connection, the reports add that in 1964, al-Khu'i dispensed a formal legal opinion which was distributed to the Shi'ite religious seminaries and which considered all regimes that ruled Iraq after 1958 regimes that lack religious and constitutional legitimacy and that are atheist and usurping regimes.

Of course, King Husayn, as the doyen of the Hashemites and the pillar of their dynasty, received that formal legal opinion with utter happiness, especially since he was being subjected to enormous pressure by the Iraqi-Egyptian axis existing at the time between Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir and 'Abd-al-Salam 'Arif. Meanwhile, Jordan's relations with Syria were not as well as one could possibly wish because the Ba'th Party had assumed power in the northern neighbor.

King Husayn did not forget this significant gesture on the part of Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i, "his cousin," and kept in touch with him secretly through special emissaries. The king checked on his conditions and reassured himself about him, even when Jordanian-Iraqi relations were at the peak of their honeymoon. It seems that this relationship did not signify anything extraordinary to the Iraqi president, who had kept and continues to keep Shi'ite movements under close and constant watch and surveillance. The Iraqi Government considered al-Khu'i the most moderate Shi'ite cleric and the one closest to it. It also believed that no relationship between al-Khu'i and King Husayn posed any threat to the regime.

At a later phase, i.e. in mid-1992, King Husayn instructed some of his aides to ask Iraq officially, through the Iraqi Embassy in Amman, to permit al-Khu'i to come to Amman, considering that he had gotten old and that his health had deteriorated as a result of a long bout with a heart disease, to be treated at al-Husayn Military Medical Town Hospital or to be taken abroad for treatment, if his condition required it.

However, the Iraqis procrastinated. Nuri al-Ways, their ambassador in Amman at the time and currently, was unable to provide a decisive answer for three months because he had not received anything form Baghdad. King Husayn understood this procrastination to be a rejection of his aforementioned request. He talked bitterly and at length on this issue in one of his private meetings.

It seems that Saddam Husayn, who is well known for not trusting even his sons and his closest confidants and who was aware of the special relationship between King Husayn and Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i, feared that the Jordanian monarch would exploit the presence of the highest Shi'ite Islamic authority in Amman to bring up the issue of the old formal legal opinion and to set things in motion to topple him through this channel and by way of this means.

But the chronic illness from which Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i had long suffered did not give him time. He died a few months after King Husayn had requested that he be moved to Jordan — a request which the Iraqi president turned down. Thus, the Jordanian monarch felt that he had lost a main pillar of the Hashemite family in Iraq.

For a variety of intricate humanitarian, emotional, familial, and political motives, King Husayn tried to dispatch to Iraq a number of his family members, including 'Abdallah, his oldest son who is commander of the Shock Troops Division; and Prince Ra'd Bin Zayd Bin al-Husayn, his father's cousin, to request that al-Khu'i be buried in Jordan. Prince Ra'd is considered by Jordanian circles the man "most entitled" to the Iraqi throne because his father, Prince Zayd, is the brother of King Faysal I. Zayd was Iraq's ambassador in Istanbul when the bloody 1958 coup was staged, wiping out the entire royal family in Iraq, excluding one child. This child is now al-Sharif 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn, the maternal cousin of King Faysal II. He lives in London and spearheads the claim to his relatives' lost throne.

However, Saddam Husayn, who felt that his separation from King Husayn was a foregone conclusion and who started suspecting that the Jordanian monarch had let his doors wide open for the Iraqi opposition and that he was perhaps thinking and working to restore his family rule to Iraq, rejected this request also. Moreover, Saddam intentionally rushed burial of the body of Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i without any popular or official ceremonies.

True Nature of Jordanian Position

But is it true that King Husayn has begun to seriously think of restoring his family throne in Iraq and that he brought in General Husayn Kamil to be the Trojan horse for a Hashemite return to Baghdad?

First and foremost, we must note, relying on what has been recounted by Dr. Mustafa Hamarinah, head of the Jordanian University's Strategic Studies Institute, that a prominent Iraqi opposition figure sent a fax from a European capital to Prince Ra'd Bin Zayd, who holds the honorary position of chief master of ceremonies at the royal court in Amman, to tell him that the Iraqi opposition had selected him to be the constitutional king of Iraq because he is most entitled to the Hashemite throne that was destroyed by the bloody military coup of 1958.

According to the same source, Prince Ra'd Bin Zayd carried that message and rushed to King Husayn to acquaint him with it. The Jordanian monarch responded unenthusiastically, taking the message from his father's cousin and asking him to keep silent and not to discuss this issue at all because it was not the time to open old wounds and because Jordan could do without such illusory and unrealistic battles.

The fact is that King Husayn, who has not embraced in any way the call by al-Sharif 'Ali, King Faysal II's maternal cousin, and who has instructed the Jordanian Royal Court to issue a statement denying the presence of any descendant from King Faysal I called Prince Muhammad — the fact is that King Husayn knows perfectly well that the regional formula and the international formula cannot withstand the return of the Hashemites to power in Iraq.

Jordan's monarch has reaffirmed this conviction repeatedly in an attempt to reassure those who have suspicions in this regard. He has stated repeatedly to more than one paper that he has no ambitions in Iraq and that his entire concern is to see that Iraq remains united; that it adopts the democratic path and political plurality; and that it achieves national reconciliation between its three main components: the Sunnis, the Shi'ites, and the Kurds.

There is no doubt that King Husayn recalls his kinsmen's rule of Iraq with grief and bitterness and that he always remembers their massacre there with pain and sorrow. However, it is proven that even when the wound was still fresh and the issue still alive, he did not work to restore that rule. He immediately absorbed all those who fled Iraq to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in wake of the 1958 coup. He did not think for a moment of organizing those escapees in an opposition nucleus to demand restoration of the Hashemite rule, unlike Prince Reza Pahlavi who currently leads the opposition to demand the restoration of his father's and grandfather's throne in Tehran.

King Husayn is extremely realistic, and this is why he realizes that the idea of returning the Hashemites to power in Iraq can be nothing more than a rosy dream. He realizes the significance of the fact that al-Husayn Bin 'Ali [Prophet Muhammad's grandson] went to Iraq because he was invited to go there by its people as the man most entitled to rule them. Al-Husayn's fate was that historical massacre whose theater was Karbala' on the banks of the Euphrates River. The memory of that distant massacre continues to evoke grief in the hearts of Muslims in all their countries and regions.

King Husayn cannot agree to an adventure such as the adventure of restoring the Hashemite throne to Iraq. He cannot encourage anybody to embark on this adventure because he realizes that the region's givens and formulae oppose such a tendency. The most that the king aspires for is the establishment of a moderate regime in Iraq — a regime that gains the country an economic and political dimension and that helps it avoid any regional adventure like Saddam Husayn's unsuccessful adventure in Kuwait.

Dreams of returning to Iraq may occur to the minds of some minor princes who have not been tempered by experience and who have not been burnt by the fires of regional formulae and international machinations. What is certain though—and this is the opinion of a large number of high-ranking Jordanian officials who have worked alongside the Jordanian monarch for nearly 40 years—is that the king does not approve even of these dreams, even though they are just dreams. He know that what has gone will not return and that if the past could come back, all of East Europe's kings or their heirs would have returned to their thrones and the thrones of their fathers and forefathers since the collapse of the communist regimes there.

Al-Khu'i Dispensed Only Four Opinions on Political Issues

'Abd-al-Majid al-Khu'i, the son of Ayatollah Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i, the departed Shi'ite authority, has denied the presence of this formal legal opinion, asserting that it is fabricated and untrue. 'Abd-al-Majid has said, "My father never dispensed a formal legal opinion about anybody being entitled to Iraq's leadership, not even King Husayn. Politically, he dispensed formal legal opinions on four issues only, namely: Sunni infiltration of Iran during the shah's days; the Palestine issue; the unlawfulness of dealing in property plundered from Kuwait and the demand that Iraq withdraw its forces from Kuwait and that the issue be resolved peacefully within an Arab and Islamic context; and, fourth, support for the popular uprising in southern Iraq against the regime. He stressed that the Jordanian Government requested that his father go to Jordan to be treated there and that the Iraqi Government turned down the request, as it turned down the Jordanian request to send a medical team to treat him. Upon his death, Abu-al-Qasim al-Khu'i left behind al-Khu'i Islamic Foundation in London, which is managed by his sons 'Abd-al-Majid and Yusuf. The foundation has branches in the United States and Manchester and it is active in the area of charities and of establishing

religious schools and libraries, mosques, and Islamic centers in all parts of the world.

Iraq: Finance Minister on Austerity Measures

JN2903084996 Baghdad AL-'IRAQ in Arabic 6 Mar 96 p 4

[Report on interview with Iraqi Finance Minister Hikmat al-'Azzawi by correspondent 'Adil al-Shuwayyah; place and date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] We had an important interview with Finance Minister Hikmat al-'Azzawi on his ministry's plans in light of the leader's 12 December 1995 message to cabinet members, the positive developments represented by the continuous rise in the Iraqi dinar's exchange rate, and the exchange rate's effect on the course of the national economy. The interview also covered several other issues concerning both citizens and government officials. During the 90-minute interview, the paper asked several questions, to which Minister Hikmat al-'Azzawi gave the following replies:

The ministry's future will be guided by the general framework contained in the leader's 12 December 1995 message to cabinet members. The framework is an integral economic plan for comprehensive reform. The message diagnoses the economy's negative aspects, suggests remedies, and outlines procedures, some of which are actual decisions on how to tackle these aspects. The message says the manifestations of runaway inflation are due to big expenditures that are not met by revenue. They are also due to deficit allocations, which means issuing funds that are not covered by revenue.

The message suggests solutions to all these problems. It links expenditure with revenue. One of the immediate measures says there should be no increase in the volume of money in circulation unless there is an increase in revenue. The increases in currency in circulation were one cause of inflation. [passage omitted]

The minister added: The Finance Ministry, which is responsible for expenditure and the development of revenue, was called upon to base its present and future work on this message. In studying the current budget, both expenditure and revenue, we discovered that, with a little flexibility, there is a good chance to suppress expenditure and increase revenue to some degree. [passage omitted]

The minister continued: According to the leader's directives and the successive cabinet meetings, expenditures were suppressed in the 1996 budget according to the central rules and certain basic needs. Executive officials were asked to revise their budgetary assessments for the current year by making maximum reductions. They were told that expenditures must not exceed actual expenditures for 1995, at maximum. In other words, spending must continue to be suppressed. This was followed by several discussions in which expenditures were further limited to promising new levels. Actual spending was made dependent on an improvement in the Iraqi economy's growth rate and its impact on the dinar's purchasing power. In January, for example, actual spending was restricted to wages, remunerations, allowances, and certain contractual obligations (such as in the military sectors) for food and hospitals at the narrowest limits. In February, the situation was as flexible as it was in January. The idea is that spending should be cut to 50 percent of what it was in the same month last year. You can see that the drastic cuts in actual spending has had a positive effect in eliminating the manifestations of inflation. [passage omitted]

[Al-Shuwayyah] Regarding the rise in the dinar's exchange rate and the subsequent rise in purchasing power, are there any other financial measures that have been taken or will be taken in the near future?

[Al-'Azzawi] Revising the volume of expenditures will depend a great deal on the measures that are being taken, as well as the nature of the work of executive officials. Let us suppose that a certain ministry has obligations regarding the purchase of foodstuffs that are governed by the prices that prevailed during a previous period. When we review the prices now and discover the big change, does this not mean that there is good justification for revising expenditures?. Logic says yes. Therefore, a reduction in the allocations for these foodstuffs becomes desirable in view of its positive effects. In other words, the improvement in the exchange rate of the dinar is of special significance to the improvement of the economy. An improvement in one field leads to an improvement in another.

[Al-Shuwayyah] But what about the recurrent street rumors?

[Al-'Azzawi] The relative austerity measures that have been taken are not the result of an illness in the economy, but the outcome of economic reorganization. When there is a need to suppress expenditure, this is explained as an austerity measure. But is it a sign of illness? No, because it has come in response to administrative and economic directives that seek improvement. It is a temporary measure that is dependent on the wish of the leadership. [passage omitted]

[Al-Shuwayyah] How about the banking industry, and people's comments about their dissatisfaction with it?

[Al-'Azzawi] The banking system is still unable to offer the kind of efficiency expected by Iraqi society and the market. It is still limited, in the sense that there is room for expansion. If we consider the service provided by banks, we will find that it is not satisfactory. The banking industry and its services to the public is still below our expectations. The reasons are administrative methods and the lack of suitable human resources to match the expansion that has occurred in this sector. Other reasons are technical and result from the unfair embargo. The development of banks calls for better equipment and technical methods (money calculators and computers). [passage omitted]

[Al-Shuwayyah] How about taxes?

[Al-'Azzawi] Up to now, we have not levied any new taxes. We have only revived old ones that were suspended due to aggression and economic hardships. We are trying to restore these taxes since, as I said, the program calls for improving revenue for economic and social reasons. Social services depend on potential funding. When people demand health services, educational services, or new roads and bridges, where will the government get the funds to cover the expenditures? Therefore, it is essential to get some of the money from the members of the community under certain fair considerations in order to invest them in these projects. In the past, we depended on oil revenue, but we must understand that oil revenues do not belong to this generation only, but also to coming generations. Using oil revenue for the sake of this generation alone is unfair. [passage omitted]

Israel: Peres, Shahal, Liba'i Comment on Shamgar Findings

TA2803145796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1400 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres called the work carried out by the Shamgar Commission appointed to investigate Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin's assassination thorough and responsible. He said he would decide what steps are necessary after he has studied the report. The cabinet secretary received the report this morning from a commission representative. David Ze'ev reports:

[Begin Ze'ev recording] [passage omitted] In the early afternoon, the Prime Minister's Office issued a statement saying Shim'on Peres had received the report and that he expressed his appreciation for the responsible and thorough work conducted by former Supreme Court President Me'ir Shamgar and the other members of the commission. The statement says the prime minister will study the findings and recommendations of the report and will then decide on the necessary steps. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Public Security Minister Moshe Shahal says all the commission's recommendations regarding the police will be implemented. Shahal said the commission addressed both structural and operational issues and called for improved coordination between the police and the General Security Services [GSS].

Justice Minister David Liba'i praised the work of the commission. He described the findings of the panel as extremely grave in that the GSS failed to fulfill its central objective: to protect the prime minister.

Hagay Merom, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, said he was not surprised that the commission held the GSS primarily responsible for the security lapses that led to Rabin's assassination. [passage omitted]

Israel: Peres Says Government To Adopt Shamgar Findings

TA2803164296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1600 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres said that the government will adopt the Shamgar Commission's findings. He said that the recommendations are reasonable and that the government has been shown a direction and proposals in order to draw the necessary lessons. Our correspondent Pe'erli Shahar reports that the prime minister made the remarks after visiting wounded at Tel Hashomer Hospital.

Israel: Peres—Ramallah Operation Aimed Against 'Terrorist' Attacks

TA2803182896 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1800 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres said that the government will adopt the Shamgar Commission's findings. He said that the recommendations are reasonable and that the government has been shown a direction and proposals in order to learn the necessary lessons.

On the detention of hundreds of suspects in the Ramallah area, he said these are systematic checks aimed at thwarting terrorist attacks.

On the redeployment in Hebron, the prime minister said that there are many Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] activists there and that when the time comes, all aspects of the matter will be studied.

Israel: Peres Reiterates Commitment to Hebron Redeployment

TA2903060096 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0400 GMT 29 Mar 96

[Report by political correspondent Udi Segal]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Turning to the Palestinian issue, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres talked about Yasir 'Arafat's actions against terror moving up a rung. Six terrorist attacks were prevented thanks to the closure, he said, some of them as a result of the Palestinian Authority's actions. Nevertheless, he stressed, the pullout from Hebron, which had been scheduled for last night, is not yet on the agenda.

[Begin Peres recording] We are committed to a redeployment, and we have not reneged on it. However, there is quite a Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] presence in Hebron, including a specific gang, and we must examine the issue from all possible angles. [end recording]

Peres is not prepared to take any risks. The closure will continue, the negotiations will be frozen at least until after the elections, and 'Arafat will continue to pay the price.

Israel: IDF Continues To Arrest Hamas Suspects

TA2903051196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0400 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] continued to arrest Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] suspects last night as well. As part of these activities, early this morning the security forces arrested six suspects in Nabulus, Ramallah, and Hebron.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English at 0400 GMT on 29 March notes that the number of Palestinians rounded up on 28 March in the Ramallah area totals 370.]

Israel: Peres To Propose 'Strategic Alliance' to Clinton

TA2903093596 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 29 Mar 96 pp A1, A14

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel will propose to the United States that at the end of their meeting on 30 April President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Shim'on Peres issue a joint statement announcing that relations between the two countries have evolved into "a strategic alliance."

According to the Israeli proposal, Peres and Clinton would announce their intention to finalize the agreement on the enhancement of strategic relations between Israel and the United States and to examine various options to this effect, including a mutual defense pact, by September. Peres appointed Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq to coordinate the negotiations with the United States on the strategic agreement, an issue that will feature prominently in Baraq's meeting with Warren Christopher in mid-April.

Sometime during the Passover holiday [5-10 April] Defense Ministry Director General David 'Ivri and Uri Savir, coordinator of the political negotiations, will fly to the United States to start discussions with administration officials. Israel proposes to establish two joint committees which would discuss the enhancement of relations in the security-military and the economic-political spheres.

A draft of the joint statement, which is based on a working paper formulated by the Defense Ministry, was presented in a meeting held by Baraq this week. According to the draft that will be presented to the U.S. Administration, the United States would express its commitment to Israel's security and to upholding and strengthening its ability "to deter and defend itself against any threat." The two countries would undertake to pursue the peace process until a comprehensive peace is achieved in the Middle East.

The principles of the agreement on the enhancement of relations that Israel proposes to define during Peres' upcoming visit to the United States are: — Maintaining the military and economic aid to Israel, and extending special aid in the form of surplus weapons and equipment. — Enhancing the coordination and cooperation in the event of threats to Israel or an undermining of regional stability. — Setting up a regional security framework with the participation of Israel and Arab countries. — Releasing advanced technologies to the IDF [Israel Defense Forces]. — Expanding intelligence cooperation. — Expanding commercial and economic relations. — Extending U.S. aid to Israel for immigrant absorption and the solution of the water problem.

Israeli officials do not know yet whether the Americans will agree to issue a joint Clinton-Peres statement or will seek to issue a presidential announcement by Clinton alone. Nor are they sure that it will be possible to finalize the defense pact or any other agreement independently of progress in the negotiations with Syria.

Peres is in favor of signing a defense charter with the United States which will necessitate the approval of two thirds of the Senate. In his opinion, bilateral relations will this way get a formal ratification from Congress, which will uphold its stability in the event of a change of power in Washington. Foreign Minister Baraq and the professional level in the Israeli Defense and Foreign Ministries prefer not to propose a charter, which entails prolonged deliberations, and want to make do with an agreement with the administration that does not require the Senate's approval.

It was noted in the internal deliberations that from the point of view of international law, there is no difference between the two types of agreement as far as their status or validity is concerned and that both equally commit the United States. The essential difference between them has to do with U.S. law, since a charter approved by the Senate becomes part of U.S. legislation.

Israel: Atomic Energy Commission Statement on Dimona Reactor

TA2803155196 Jerusalem GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE in English 1230 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Statement issued by the Atomic Energy Commission]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jerusalem — In light of reports in the media, the following is a statement by the Atomic Energy Commission:

1. The Nuclear Research Center Negev (NRCN) and the waste site there, were established at a site in which all the geological and hydrological properties were known at the outset, and were thoroughly investigated before the center was established.

2. There is no "underground lake", as reported. The existence of an underground water reservoir in Nubian sandstone was known even then. This water is brackish and contains sulfur and chloride and is therefore undrinkable.

3. Various types of natural damage were taken into account before this site was selected for waste removal.

4. Nuclear waste at the NRCN site has never contaminated the water sources. The waste matter of all types is securely stored in accordance with optimal international criteria. A geological cross-section of rock strata prevents any possibility of contamination of the underground water in the area.

5. The Ministry of Environment monitors the air, ground and water of the region surrounding the NRCN. No radioactive contamination, which could potentially endanger the population, has been found. The area around the NRCN site is constantly monitored by professionals in the field. There are no present findings of risk to employees.

6. The waste site does not endanger hikers to the Small Crater. This was checked several times by a team from the Ministry of the Environment. Similarly, two open tours to the region conducted by Environment Minister Yosi Sarid revealed no excessive levels of radiation in the area beyond the background radiation.

7. There is no basis for comparison between the waste site at the NRCN and other sites around the world that were presented in the plan. The capacity of the power station at Chernobyl was at least 100 times that of NRCN, and the capacity of Hanford 800 times its capacity. Israel's research reactors (NRCN and Soreq Nuclear Research Center) are small and their systems well-maintained.

8. The barrels at the focus of the plan are intended to serve as receptacles for transporting radioactive waste from hospitals and research institutions to the national clearing site. Most of the material cleared loses its radioactivity in a relatively short time (from a few days to a few months), before any damage is caused to the barrel.

9. All radioactive waste is handled in accordance with the most advanced know-how and technology in the world. Constant supervision and control are in place to insure that storage conditions meet safety needs in the best possible way.

The Atomic Energy Commission stresses that all its activities are subject to the full control of external bodies: The Advisory Commission for Nuclear Safety, which oversees safety activities of the Atomic Energy Commission and which reports directly to the Prime Minister; the State Comptroller; and Knesset committees which deal with the issue.

The management of the Atomic Energy Commission ascribes the utmost importance to the health and safety of its employees. Unfortunately cancer is a widespread illness and most forms of it are unrelated to radiation. According to statistics, in the western world cancer strikes more than 30% of the population, irrespective of the workplace.

The center for registration of cancer in the Ministry of Health conducted a comprehensive survey on the incidence of cancer among NRCN workers. The survey found that the incidence of cancer among the population is no greater than that in similar strata of the general population. The survey was checked again by an outside specialist in epidemiology and was found to be accurate.

Recently, the National Insurance Institute has expanded the criteria for benefits to NRCN employees exposed to radiation, and recognizes their illnesses as work-related.

Israel: Jordan Seeks Clarifications on Nuclear Leaks; Sarid Denies

TA2803153996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1500 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jordan's Crown Prince Hasan phoned Environment Minister Yosi Sarid at noon today and asked for clarifications on reports published in recent days about environmental hazards originating from the nuclear reactor in Dimona. Our correspondent Shula Schmerling reports that Minister Sarid told Prince Hasan that the Dimona reactor is one of the safest and most secure reactors in the world and has never contaminated its environs. He stressed that the Environment Ministry regularly monitors the air, soil, and water in the vicinity of the reactor and that, to date, there have been no findings of radioactive contamination posing any danger whatsoever to the population.

Israel: Officials—Egypt Seeks Syrian Role in Nuclear Dispute

TA2903100996 Tel Aviv HATZOFE in Hebrew 29 Mar 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The reports on Syrian-Egyptian contacts directed at coordinating stands on Israel's nuclear potential have generated mixed reactions in Jerusalem.

The prevailing assumption is that the anti-Israeli line spearheaded by Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa aims to resurrect the Egyptian-Israeli contention on the nuclear issue. The Egyptians are using the Israeli reports on an air contamination hazard in the vicinity of the Dimona nuclear reactor as a pretext.

The Egyptians have claimed for years that since the Dimona area is extremely close to the Egyptian border, Israel must involve Egypt in supervising the reactor and its operations.

Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and Egyptian President Husni Mubarak agreed in the past that the issue was to be taken off the bilateral agenda.

Yet today senior officials believe that Musa is seeking to take advantage of the Israeli reports and, after coordinating the Egyptian and Syrian stands, to increase the Syrian involvement in the matter. Such coordination would cause additional pressure for Israeli concessions on the nuclear issue. Syria cannot lose by taking this course of action — on the contrary. According to the same theory, Damascus believes that the nuclear card has real value in the negotiations on a permanent peace treaty with Israel. [passage omitted]

Israel: U.S. Seen Suppressing Independence, Helping Peres Win

TA2803162896 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV (HAYOM supplement) in Hebrew 28 Mar 96 p 2

[Commentary by Washington correspondent Avino'am Bar-Yosef: "Things That Are Seen From There"]

[FBIS Translated Text] In less than a month the State of Israel will celebrate its 48th birthday. There will be a gala concert at Solomon's Pool in Jerusalem, fireworks, and festive declarations. President Bill Clinton, the most popular politician in north Tel Aviv, will send a congratulatory cable from Washington, the capital of the world.

Forty-eight is a nice age. By that age people have usually reached the middle of the road and they start reaping the fruit of their life's efforts. The children are getting ready to spread their wings and leave the nest, however hard this may be to accept. Professionally, they are supposed to have consolidated their achievements, exhausted their abilities, attained economic independence, taken stock of their life, and planned their moves for the second part of their life.

Forty-eight years are hardly a sign of maturity for a country. This is the age at which a mature people must choose a leadership with a head over its shoulders and with both feet on the ground; an inspired leadership that will set realistic goals, will not orbit in outer space, and will point to the light at the end of the tunnel; a leadership that will lead to independence within given limitations.

For 48 years, Israel has fought for its independence, paid with the blood of its sons, led the nation to achievements that no other country in the world even conceived of, gone from the Holocaust to statehood, gathered together the Jewish diaspora, renewed the language of the Bible, made the wilderness blossom despite its lack of skilled hands, risen to the peaks of high technology, and — in spite of David Levi, Arye Der'i, Adisu Massala, and Natan Sharansky — accomplished ethnic assimilation.

The world watched and very rarely applauded. It thought the success was going to the young state's head and that it would try to influence the world just as the Jews influenced the culture of the gentiles in 2,000 years of exile (did you ever stop to consider the percentage of Jews who are Nobel prize laureates?).

This week we were so absorbed in the primaries that we had no time to look around. We were busy checking out the candidates. Each one of us had his own list and had a hard time digesting the results because these affected the very essence of our soul. We wanted to believe that we were determining the fate of our precious children who are about to spread their wings and leave the nest.

In faraway Washington the administration's Middle East team sat down making cold calculations about the implications. There is no doubting the sympathy this team feels toward Israel. It admires its achievements, and at the same time fears them. Its goal is "to put things in proportion," and to that end it wants to manage the situation by remote control.

People in Washington have learned that the results of the primaries in Israel have limited value; that it really does not make much difference whether 'Uzi Bar'am got to second place in the left-wing bloc by right or whether David Levi and Refa'el Eytan got there by cunning. What matters to them is who will be at the top and who will really do the work. They know that if Peres wins, Uri Savir and Yosi Beilin may have more influence than not only 'Uzi Bar'am, but also Ehud Baraq and Hayim Ramon. They want to know who will set the tone in Netanyahu's camp, Ari'el Sharon or Dan Meridor.

On the eve of the State of Israel's 48th birthday, the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] was placed on alert along the northern border, but Washington did not give it the green light to cleanse the Hizballah nests so as not to hurt Syria's honor. On the eve of Israel's birthday there are discussions in the United States about the implications of the strategic pact that will put north Tel Avivians at ease but will tie Jerusalem's hands. On the eve of the mid-life birthday, the Americans are trying to determine the dosage of the closure and the policy concerning the publication of inflammatory remarks by Yasir 'Arafat, Nabil Sha'th, and Musa Abu-Marzuq.

People in Washington conducted their own independent polls this week and concluded that in order to win Netanyahu needs 55 percent of the Jewish vote. The administration has no real predilection between Ehud

Baraq or Bibi Netanyahu. They see them as two young Israelis made of the same stuff, but holding different views. They realize that the leadership in Israel will be handed over to the statehood generation, if not in these elections then in the next. They only want to put it off and get to this transition, which they consider the real change, with faits accomplis. Perhaps that is why they are going out of their way to help Shim'on Peres win.

Washington makes these cold calculations while constantly checking the temperature in Israel. When they notice that the baby is running a fever they give him a cold bath and abstain from giving him a high dose of magic treatment.

All in all, they like the goal set by Shim'on Peres of "a new Middle East." It suits them. Deep in their heart they know that if Bibi Netanyahu were to set a realistic national goal the Jewish majority would go after him and reduce the political process in which they invested so much effort to more modest dimensions. They will really be happy to celebrate our 48th birthday with us, but they are not thrilled to make these celebrations look like an independence day.

Israel: Poll Shows Peres Maintaining Edge Over Netanyahu

TA2903100196 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 29 Mar 96 p 1

[Gallup poll]

[FBIS Translated Text] Question: Were elections to the premiership held today, for whom would you vote? Shim'on Peres—48 percent Binyamin Netanyahu—40 percent Do not know/refuse to answer—12 percent.

Question: Were elections to the Knesset held today, for which party would you vote? (Answers in Knesset seats, with current number of seats given in parentheses) Labor—45 (44) Likud+Tzomet+Gesher—39 (40) Meretz—6 (12) SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim]—4 (6) National Religious Party—4-5 (6) Moledet—2-3 (3) United Torah Jewry—4 (4) Arabs—6 (5) The Third Way—2 Immigrants—3 Do not know/refuse to answer—3 Left-wing bloc—57 Right-wing bloc—41-42 Centrist bloc (Third Way + immigrants)—5 Religious bloc—12-13

The poll was conducted on 27 March among 574 Israeli adults. The margin of error is approximately 4 percent.

Jordan: Deputy Expresses Concern Over Jordanian Imprisoned in U.S.

JN2803144596 Amman AL-ASWAQ in Arabic 28-29 Mar 96 p 4

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Sulayman al-Sa'd, member of the [Jordanian] House of the Representatives, sent a memorandum to the minister of justice concerning Iyad Najm, a Jordanian citizen standing trial in the United States in connection with the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York.

Deputy al-Sa'd said in his memorandum: I learned that Jordanian citizen Iyad Najm, who is charged with bombing the World Trade Center in New York and who was extradited to the United States, is being held in very bad conditions in prison and is not treated as well as other prisoners.

He added: I learned from the youth's family that the judicial authorities there appointed a Jewish lawyer for him against his will. This lawyer is not defending Najm in a way that is acceptable to him. I also learned from Najm's family that the cell in which he is being held is unhealthy and infested with scorpions and other harmful insects.

Deputy al-Sa'd called on the justice minister to address the competent U.S. authorities to replace the appointed lawyer with a non-Jewish American lawyer known for fairness and competence in defending prisoners. He also called for moving Najm to a better prison. He urged the minister to ask the Jordanian Embassy there to take care of Najm, visit him, follow up his case, and keep the government informed about his health and the progress of his trial.

Jordan: Crown Prince Phones Israeli Minister on Dimona Reactor Leakage

JN2803201596 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A telephone conversation was held this morning between His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hasan, the regent, and Yosi Sarid, Israeli minister of environmental protection. His highness asked the Israeli minister about Israeli experts' reports of a possible nuclear leakage from the Israeli Dimona nuclear reactor and the radioactive contamination which may result from such leakage. The Israeli environment minister said he will send his highness the regent a thorough technical report on the issue tomorrow.

Jordan: Germany To Provide JD 20 Million in Financial, Technical Aid

JN2803214396 Amman Jordan Television Network in English 2000 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Announcer-read report from "News at Ten" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Officials from Jordan and Germany discussed German technical and financial assistance to the Kingdom in preliminary talks in Amman. The talks held at the Planning Ministry centered on priority projects to be implemented in the Kingdom, especially in the water and agricultural sector.

A memorandum of understanding was signed on ways to distribute both financial and technical assistance to the Kingdom amounting to almost 20 million Jordanian dinars [JD].

Jordan: Prime Minister Reaffirms Principles of Foreign Policy

JN2803160596 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 28-29 Mar 96 p 1

["Special to the JORDAN TIMES" by Tariq al-Mumani]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Amman—Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti said on Wednesday [27 March] the main principles of Jordan's foreign policy were based on Islamic, Arab civilisation and the objectives of the Great Arab Revolt.

Addressing a regular Lower House of Parliament session, Mr. al-Kabariti said these principles hinge on five essential elements: Defending national independence and security in the face of challenges and threats, preserving national unity and sovereignty and territorial integrity, seeking to ensure national and regional security, maintaining balanced and equitable relations with all Arab and Islamic countries without interfering in their internal affairs and respecting all countries' views with regard to their own political regimes.

Mr. al-Kabariti, who was replying to a request to the government by Deputy Bassam al-'Umush to outline Jordan's foreign policies and Parliament's role in cementing the country's ties with Arab, and Islamic countries, said that "Jordan, in its quest to carry out these policies, seeks cooperation with various countries, observes due respect to international law, rejects all forms of political violence and terrorism, adopts and upholds democracy in its foreign and domestic endeavours."

Jordan, he said, has its own right to and options for political and diplomatic manoeuvres. The options open to the country had so far enabled its leadership to overcome major obstacles over the years, he said.

As to Parliament's role, he said, the Foreign Ministry does not determine for Parliament its role and its dealings in matters connected with foreign relations.

The Jordanian Constitution and Parliament's protocols and agreements with parliaments of other countries as well as Parliament's internal statutes determine Parliament's relations, he added.

Deputy al-'Umush, a member of the Islamic Action Front bloc, said Iraq was Jordan's strategic depth and therefore everything should be done to safeguard Jordanian-Iraqi relations.

He urged the government to reconsider a decision for allowing foreign aircraft to carry out flights over southern Iraq from bases in Jordan. He said such a reconsideration would be in conformity with the Kingdom's principles of non-interference in other countries' affairs. [passage omitted]

Jordan: Court To Review Shubaylat's Appeal on al-Balqa' Candidacy

JN2803115196 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 28-29 Mar 96 p 3

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman (J.T.)—The al-Salt court of first instance will on Saturday [30 March] examine an appeal submitted by Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) President Layth Shubaylat's lawyers contesting al-Balqa' Governor's rejection of Mr. Shubaylat's candidacy in the 15 April parliamentary by-elections. The announcement was made Wednesday by the court's chief presiding judge Hassan Abu Zunaymah after Mr. Shubaylat's lawyer Rasmi al-Khuza'i filed the appeal protesting a decision by governor Dhib Sulayman Monday rejecting the candidacy.

The governor had said that Mr. Shubaylat, who was convicted of slandering Royal family members and sentenced to three years in prison, had not met the requirements for candidacy.

He said that Mr. Shubaylat failed to personally sign the nominating papers before the governor, was convicted of lese majeste charges and sentenced to three years in prison, and had financial interests with the government through three major contracts that a company he co-owns has with the government. These reasons, said the governor, render Mr. Shubaylat's candidacy illegal.

The by-elections on 15 April will be held to fill a parliamentary seat which became vacant due to the death of deputy Irabhim Shihdah last January.

Mr. Sulayman told a press conference in al-Salt Wednesday that his decision was taken in "complete neutrality," adding that he had demanded that all those nominating themselves as candidates for the coming by-elections meet the requirements set by the law.

He said that the fact that Mr. Shubaylat was benefiting from contracts with the government was one main reason for the rejection of his request.

Referring to the preparations for the by-elections, the governor said that he will shortly announce the names of the 17 candidates to the public, adding that five days will be allowed for any contest or objection to the candidacies at the higher Court of Justice in accordance with article 26 of the Election Law.

A committee handling Mr. Shubaylat's campaign to run in the by-elections meanwhile issued a statement in which it claimed that the al-Balqa' governor had banned a press conference in al-Salt which the committee had planned for Wednesday to reply to the governor's rejection of Mr. Shubaylat's nomination.

The Committee claimed in its statement that Mr. Shubaylat's lawyers had failed to get prison authorities' permission to allow a notary public to enter the prison and have Mr. Shubaylat sign the request to contest the elections before him even though they had secured a court order allowing that.

It also said that Shubaylat himself wrote to the minister of justice and interior and the prosecutor general protesting against this procedure but that his appeals went unheeded.

A total of 65,277 citizens in the al-Balqa' district are eligible to vote at the 76 voting centres in the al-Balqa' governorate next month.

Meanwhile, in a new development in the Shubaylat's case, the Assistant Prosecutor General Mamun Khasawinah was reported to have submitted a request to the Court of Cassation demanding that Mr. Shubaylat be sentenced to four and a half years in prison rather than three years as sentenced by the State Security Court.

According to AL-RA'Y daily, Gen. Khasawinah said in his appeal that the State Security Court committed a "blunder" in the application of article 72/1 of the Penal Code, and should have applied the second as well as the first paragraphs of that article, which impose one and a half times the duration of the prison sentence stated under the first paragraph, adding that State Security Court is entitled by law to impose a combination of the sentences.

Lebanon: Washington Meeting Said To Discuss 'Military Blow' to Iran

NC2803150896 Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic 18 Mar 96 pp 1, 17

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Cairo, AL-SAFIR—Citing high-ranking Egyptian officials, informed diplomatic sources have stated that the most serious decision made on the sidelines of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit was to give a painful blow to the Islamic Republic of Iran. These sources emphasize that the decision was made in Washington and Tel Aviv even before the summit was hastily convened under the guise of "combating terrorism." Perhaps this was the reason for convening the summit: to give an "international character" to the bilateral decision and to sell it and justify it with "Arab pretexts" in addition to the U.S.-Israeli ones.

High-ranking Egyptian officials have cautiously circulated information that the guests at the meeting of the "follow-up committee" scheduled for Washington on 28 March might find themselves asked to endorse a decision to deal a military blow to Iran.

Various security and intelligence services in the United States, Israel, most European countries, and the Arab countries that participated in the Sharm al-Shaykh summit are expected to participate in the committee's first meeting.

Diplomatic sources say that Germany's escalation of its anti-Iranian campaign, which become unreasonable despite the apparent flexibility of Iranian President Hashemi-Rafsanjani, is a propaganda and psychological preparation and a political prelude to U.S. or U.S.-Israeli military action against Iran for its role as the sponsor and the rear base of most fundamentalist movements and armed Islamist groups.

Although there is no lost love between Egypt and the Iranian regime, Cairo has been very embarrassed by this decision because it does not want to be a party to it and does not want to appear to Muslims as if it has instigated, facilitated, or participated in any military action against a major Islamic country, regardless of the ideological and political differences between the two countries.

Some diplomats stationed here say that they have heard high-ranking Egyptian officials criticize the way some official Arab parties at the Sharm al-Shaykh summit enthusiastically agitated against Iran, labelling it an "enemy of the Arabs." This undermined the effort to focus on Israeli ambitions and violence and on the need to continue the peace process to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the region. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: Fadlallah Sees 'No Defect' in Relations With Syria, Iran

MM2803160196 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 28 Mar 96 p 2

[Unattributed report: "Fadlallah: No Defect in Relations Between Beirut and Both Damascus and Tehran"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut — [Lebanese Islamic scholar] Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah has stressed that "there is no defect in the political reality binding Lebanon, Syria, and Iran in one trench." He said that "Lebanese-Iranian relations are normal [tabi'iyah]." He does not expect "the Washington meeting to achieve the results the United States is seeking." He stressed that "any military strike against Iran would be no vacation."

Speaking at a weekly Koranic interpretation lesson yesterday, Fadlallah broached the issue of Lebanese-Iranian relations, saying that "the process of trying to separate Syria, Lebanon, and Iran has begun." He said: "I do not believe that there is a defect in the political reality. We know that Iran is an Islamic state adopting Islam as a foundation for ideology, government, politics, economy, and all aspects of life. It is adopting a solid position toward U.S. policy, because it understands the nature of this policy, whose objective is to take control of the world, exploit its riches and strategic locations, and wreak havoc on earth. Syria, which is committed to the confrontation line with regard to Israel — a position shared with Iran — differs from Iran with regard to the nature of its relations with the United States and also the question of its willingness to establish relations with Israel within the framework of Syria's political, security, and economic terms. As for Lebanon, it has certain characteristics: Its policy is not sharp in the face of Israeli policy or U.S. policy. However, it is coordinating with Syria against Israel in more than one political area and in some positions opposed to some aspects in U.S. policy."

He added: "The position on the resistance is the same, even though it differs in terms of its color, temperature, and depth. I do not believe that the phase we are in is one separating Syria and Lebanon on the one hand and Iran on the other.

"As for the Lebanese Foreign Ministry's response to the Iranian Embassy's statement, I do not believe that it represents something serious in this connection.... I believe that the Iranian Embassy's statement was distorted and described as a violation of diplomatic traditions. So the issue was merely a diplomatic statement through the answer to a question put forward by a journalist. We know that the Lebanese Foreign Ministry did not send any notification to the Iranian Embassy."

Meanwhile, Grand Ja'farite Mufti Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir Qabalan, deputy chairman of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, has said that "conditions and developments in the region do not indicate that matters are moving in the right direction, because the remedies used to calm conditions are based on interests and policies — which complicates the crises. This is happening as a result of the continuing occupation in south and western al-Biqa'."

Syria: Envoy Says Struggle Against Occupation Not Terrorism

NC2803193496 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1855 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 28 Mar (MENA)—'Isa Darwish, Syria's ambassador in Cairo and its permanent representative at the Arab League, has stressed that Syria is eager to proceed with the peace process and that it will continue to demand that it regain its just and legitimate rights in accordance with the UN resolutions and the UN Charter.

In statements today, Darwish said a distinction must be made between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of people under occupation. He said: The struggle of the Lebanese, the Palestinians, and the Syrians in the Golan against the Israeli occupation is legitimate, and we call it national resistance.

He added: If the Sharm al-Shaykh summit calls for combating terrorism, then the United Nations is the appropriate forum for this. He said a conference to define terrorism and distinguish between it and legitimate resistance can be held.

He explained that Syria has been calling for an international conference to define terrorism since 1986. He regretted the fact that the United States thwarted that endeavor. He noted that Egypt, too, called for an international conference to define terrorism.

The Syrian ambassador hoped that no double standard will be practiced, whereby the United States and Israel offer interpretations for terrorism and not for the other remaining issues.

Syria: Radio—Dimona 'Radiation Leaks' Make Peace 'Priority'

JN2803205796 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1235 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Gentlemen: No one contests the fact that the peace process suffers from the same symptoms that caused it to become dormant all through the second half of last year. This is because Israel still makes contradictory statements, places results ahead of causes, and ignores the fact that real peace, comprising all parties, can only be based on the two factors of land and peace, that is land for peace.

With respect to the contradiction in the Israeli officials' stands, we have the Israeli prime minister saying that he will resume talks with Syria and Lebanon if he succeeds in the upcoming Israeli elections. But, at approximately the same time, he also says that he wants to reassure himself that Syria is serious in its quest for peace before speaking of a withdrawal from the Golan. He says this even though he himself repeatedly admitted that Syria wants peace and that achieving peace with Syria will, in Israel's viewpoint, be achieving peace with all the Arabs.

The contradictory stands adopted by the same Israeli official on the same issue also become apparent when the issue is tackled by a group of Israeli officials. In other words, if the Israeli prime minister says that he will resume negotiations with Syria if he succeeds in the elections slated for late May, one of his main aides would make a statement that Israel is not negotiating with Syria over withdrawal but over security.

We highlight this statement, which smacks of arrogance and unacceptable blackmail, only to underscore a certain imbalance in the Israeli stand which, perhaps, results from hesitation that reaches the point of acute contradiction in the Israeli officials stands. This imbalance might also not be a contradiction among the various stands but a distribution of roles as demonstrated by the fact that the Israelis held elections four years ago seeking a majority that allows them to make decisions. Israel is now preparing to hold new elections under the same excuse, as if the past Israeli elections were not enough. We should not forget that our stand on the Israeli elections is that they are an Israeli domestic affair that concerns Israel alone.

The UN resolution that requires implementation is the international resolution that should be implemented, regardless of the political group governing Israel. In any case, it is the peace process that suffers, because it becomes frozen, revolves in a vicious circle, or remains in deep slumber, counterbalanced by tension, an unstable situation, and the dwindling of this historic opportunity that was made available to achieve peace, that Syria made available when its stand made it possible to hold the Madrid conference. Moreover, throughout the many rounds of bilateral negotiations, Syria prevented the peace process from falling into more than one trap set by Israel's intransigence and prevarication and by its lack of seriousness toward peace. The dark cloud which is heavily blurring the peace opportunity is this irrational Israeli persistence on separating security from peace or on giving priority to security over peace. We should not forget that security is a result and not a cause of peace.

In other words, we say that only when UN Security Council resolutions — which stipulate that peace is in exchange for the Arabs' regaining all their occupied territories — are implemented, would security be achieved, not just for one party but for all parties.

The danger of the radiation leaks from the Dimona reactor is further evidence that priority must be given to peace over security and how important it is that Israel should abide by the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is a basic condition for security in the region and of its people.

The Israeli separation between security and peace is not the only factor that renders the concept of this security ambiguous. Another factor that renders it more ambiguous is that security should be for Israel alone. But, if for example the Lebanese citizen seeks security for himself, for his homeland, and for his people, Israel considers him a terrorist. Here, the international community should say what is right. It should say that Israel's naval siege of Lebanese coasts and its shelling of fishermen's boats and its preventing them from making a living is terrorism in itself. The international community should also say that shelling by Israeli planes, tanks, and artillery of towns and villages in southern Lebanon and turning their green farms into a scorched land is terrorism. It should say that the Lebanese citizen's confrontation of occupation is not terrorism but a legitimate action over which all honorable people do not differ because it is national resistance and because occupation fosters national resistance.

These are some of the obstacles Israel places on the road to peace. But, the most serious and most dangerous obstacle is the Israeli political groups' insistence on raising the Israeli society on the idea of usurping the territories and rights of others. This not only creates fierce competition among Israeli political groups to keep the occupied Arab territories, but also creates fierce competition among members of the Israeli society and even among members of any Israeli government. This greatly endangers the peace opportunity.

Therefore, just as Syria shouldered its national and international responsibilities by allowing the first Madrid conference to be held more than four years ago to launch the peace process, Syria now shoulders its national and pan-Arab responsibilities to resume the Madrid conference, but this time to rescue the peace process.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Hekmatyar Says Talks With Government To Continue

LD2803173896 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Talks have been conducted and are still continuing between ourselves and the Kabul administration. The purpose of the talks is not only to agree on the formation of a government and the sharing of ministries between ourselves: the aim of the talks is to find a comprehensive and acceptable solution. This point was made by Brother Golboddin Hekmatyar, leader of the Hezb-e Eslami-ye Afghanistan, in the course of an interview with the BBC.

Brother Hekmatyar said: The High Coordination Council [HCC] has formally announced that it has endorsed the current talks between the Hezb-e Eslami and the Kabul administration. The final decision will be made at an HCC session. If the HCC does not wish to continue the talks, then they will be stopped.

Hekmatyar added: The HCC decided that such talks should also be started with other groups. The HCC's stance and position is that if we reach a rational and a comprehensive decision with the Kabul administration and we are satisfied that the Kabul administration is earnestly fulfilling its promises and the country's crisis will be resolved, then we will discuss the matter at an HCC session and present the final decision.

Concerning the Taleban, Brother Hekmatyar said: The path chosen by the Taleban group has, unfortunately, severely dented our confidence regarding them. The Taleban had promised that they would sit at the talks table. An (?agreement) had been signed, but soon after the signing of the agreement, an official Taleban's spokesman rejected the agreement and, even during the course of talks, the Taleban began hostile provocations against us in Paktia Province. This shows that the Taleban do not want to hold earnest talks with us. At present we do not have any channel of talks open with the Taleban.

Hekmatyar said: I hope to reach an agreement that will be acceptable to all parties.

Afghanistan: Hekmatyar Calls For Meeting With Jihadi Leaders

LD2803174496 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Brother Golboddin Hekmatyar, leader of the Hezb-e Eslami-ye Afghanistan, has called for the convocation of a meeting to be attended by the Jihadi leaders.

According to a report, the Hezb-e Eslami's leader has proposed a meeting of the Jihadi formations'leaders, to be held either in Nangarhar or Laghman Provinces or in Sarobi, in order to find a solution to the current crisis in the country. The meeting should also be attended by representatives from Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the OIC [Organization of the Islamic Conference].

Afghanistan: Taleban Says Official's Statement 'Unfounded'

LD2903075496 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Dr. Sadeq Modabber, former commander of Harakat-e Eslami, has decided to work under the leadership of the Taleban.

In an interview with SHAHADAT, Masum Afghani said: Today, Thursday [28 March], a grand session, attended by a large number of Ulema, is due to be held in Kandahar Province. He added: Around one thousand Ulema and elders from various provinces of the country will take part in this session.

Masum Afghani said: We are in favor of talks and we want to resolve the country's crisis through talks.

We have held sincere talks with Dr. Sadeq Modabber. He pledged to take actual action, under the Taleban's leadership, against the Kabul administration.

In reply to another question, Masum Afghani said: The statement made yesterday in Jalalabad by Dr. Abu-Nafisa, representative of Mahmud Mestiri, when meeting the Amir of the Hezb-e Eslami, is unfounded. Taleban has never asked the United Nations to prepare the ground for talks with the Kabul administration. He said: We follow our previous stance vis-a-vis the Kabul administration. We have not changed our position. The only way to resolve the country's crisis is for Rabbani to resign unconditionally and to hand over power to the Taleban group. We see no any other rational way to find a solution to the country's problem.

Afghanistan: Opposition Radio Cites Kabul Minister on Talks

LD2903113596 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In an interview with BBC Radio, General Mohammad Yunes Qanuni, acting defense minister of the Kabul administration, said: The Islamic

State of Afghanistan [ISA] believes that the crisis in Afghanistan will only be resolved by talks and understanding between the formations and groups. For this reason, the government has showed its readiness to hold talks with all groups.

He said that talks have begun with 'Abdol Rashid Dostam, leader of the Jonbesh-e Meli so the ground is paved for the restoration of peace.

Qanuni added that talks had earlier begun with Gen. Dostam and there was some hope there too. But, when General Dostam had returned from Pakistan, we realized that he was no longer interested in talks. This is again a sign of Pakistan's intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

Gen. Yunes Qanuni added that we believe in resolving the current crisis through talks. But this again depends on the degree of independence that can be displayed by the government's opposition groups when deciding to resolve the country's crisis without intervention by any foreign country. We can resolve our problem when intervention ends.

Qanuni said: Pakistan has extended its unreserved support for the Taleban group; and now we have arrived at the conclusion that, in addition to Pakistan, some other countries are also assisting the Taleban group.

Afghanistan: Report on Illegal Trade of Enriched Uranium

MS2803145696 London INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY in English 24 Mar 96 pp 4-8

[Report by Tim McGirk: "A Year of Looting Dangerously"; all names as published; from THE SUNDAY REVIEW supplement]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Balkh has been called the "mother of cities". Set on the edge of the central Asian desert, in the lee of the Hindu Kush mountain range of northern Afghanistan, it was for many centuries an impossibly exotic crossroads of civilisations. Zoroastrianism, Greek pantheism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam have all held sway in Balkh; since 2,000 BC, wave after wave of conquerors — Persians, Greeks, Indians, Mongols — have destroyed and re—built the city, leaving behind a layered testimony of man's history as clear as the rings on a tree. Today, only ruins remain.

But what ruins: these are the sort that have archaeologists down on their knees, excitedly scratching away at the earth with a toothbrush. In Afghanistan, however, there are no longer any archaeological expeditions. Instead, on a rainy hillock, a few Afghan mujahedin, shaggy barbarians with AK-47s, stand guard while more than 100 men and boys swarm over a ruined mound. Shovelling, burrowing, and gouging with pickaxes, they churn up the muddy testimony of two millennia. In their frenzy for gold and silver antiquities, they smash perfume vials of iridescent glass that might have proved the existence of trade between Carthage and central Asia. As their shovels split little clay idols in the mud, nobody stops to wonder what gods Balkh's early inhabitants worshipped. The chance for scientific investigators finding out how these civilisations lived — and perished — is being lost for ever.

Balkh is one among hundreds of historical sites in Afghanistan that have been divided up by rival mujahedin commanders to be despoiled. These warlords operate like armed claim jumpers during the California Gold Rush; discovery of a precious item often leads to gun battles. Some use bulldozers to raze ancient tombs. Some encircle their digs with Russian tanks or use landmines to keep away intruders (landmines are cheaper than fences). Others think nothing of knocking the head off a life-size Gandhara Buddhist stone — circa third century AD and worth well over 500,000 pounds — to fit the statue on the back of a pick-up truck.

Nancy Dupree, an American scholar who has been writing about Afghanistan for more than 20 years, is one of many Western academics who believe that such wholesale looting of the country's treasures is a matter of international importance. "If you're interested in world art," she says, "in the evolution of ideas and religion, then Afghanistan's past is worth saving from these looters." One does not have to be a scholar to share her concern, because there is much more to this tragedy than mere archaeological malpractice.

An art collector in London or Tokyo, eyeing a silver Greek bowl he has bought from a smuggler for nearly 1m pounds, may feel a connection between himself and its unknown craftsman 1,000 years ago. But that moment of aesthetic epiphany comes with a dangerous price. For that art object to have reached the collector's salon, or, more likely, his bank vault, it has had to pass along a chain of corruption and piracy that extends around the world, through all levels of society — and makes the world a much more dangerous place.

The usual route from the Afghan soil goes south to Pakistan (where buyers and documentation are most easily obtained), then back through Afghanistan to the former Soviet republics (where customs checks are most easily evaded) and out from Russia to western capitals such as London (where end-purchasers with serious money can most easily be found). It is thus not just the Afghan peasant who finds the silver bowl — and has it snatched away from him by the local mujahedin commander — who is involved; nor just the smugglers.

There are also corrupt archaeologists, Afghan, Pakistani and Western, who use their PhD knowledge to tell the militias where to dig; and, in Pakistan, corrupt government officials who, if bribed, will forge export licences; not to mention attaches at foreign missions in Islamabad who, for similar considerations, will send objects out in secure diplomatic bags. If the treasure is too bulky — say, a 1-1/2 ton stone Buddha — then senior army officers must be paid off to haul it by military lorry down to Karachi port. In London, art restorers are hired by prominent dealers to repair the damage done to pieces by clumsy mujahedin.

Nor is that the end of it. Perhaps the most disturbing thought is that the pressures of 14 years of war and the near anarchy that has followed, combined with more than a century of contact with Western acquisitiveness may have obliterated Afghans' capacity for moral judgement. Now, it is all the same to Afghans whether they are smuggling opium, as they have traditionally done, or looted antiquities — or, for that matter, nuclear weapons parts stolen from military installations in the former Soviet Union. And Afghans smuggle all three.

The greed which drives the villagers to loot their own heritage, the smugglers to smuggle, and western collectors to collect, is potentially more destructive than the players imagine. The same conduits and social forces which allow the illicit trade in antiquities to take place are also involved in the more hazardous process of arms looting.

"It works like this," a western diplomat told me wearily. "First, an Afghan offers you some beautiful old Buddha head, then a Stinger missile for about $80,000, and then, if they see you're still in the game, they'll offer enriched uranium or some other nuclear goodies." He himself has been approached by several Afghan nuclear salesmen. Some he considered to be bogus, some emphatically not.

Buddha Heads or bomb parts, they all end up in or around the Pakistani frontier town of Peshawar, whose proximity to the Khyber Pass has made it the gateway between the West and East — and a gathering-place for smugglers — for centuries. In the lanes of the old bazaar a few weeks ago, I pushed my way past shops selling caged fighting grouse, gunmakers, and moneychangers, past a crazy, booming-voiced mountain man with two live scorpions crawling in his matted, dirty hair. Eventually, I reached the gold and antiques market — more than 100 stalls of it. This is where first-time foreign antiquities buyers go.

The dealer pulled a curtain closed, hiding us from the curious onlookers in the lane. Then he reached for a cheap teapot. From the pot he carefully fished out a few small items, wrapped in tissue: a terracotta goddess with round cheeks; Greek coins; a few flakes of ancient gold. Some of his offerings were obvious fakes. "What's your price range?" he inquired. "$100? $500? $5,000? I sold one coin from the Kushan period [second century BC to second century AD] to an American. He paid me $20,000."

Experienced dealers from London, Tokyo Bonn and New York seldom trifle with this bazaar barter, I subsequently discovered. An antiquities dealer who wants to pick up the really big stuff around Peshawar — say an illegally unearthed stone Buddha from the Gandhara period (between the first and fifth centuries AD) — needs to be prepared to wear native disguise and to have the ability to think straight after lung-bursting quantities of hashish smoke.

The ritual seldom varies for these buyers. First, a driver pulls up outside the Pearl-Continental or Dean's Hotel in a Toyota Landcruiser with an extra set of baggy Pathan clothes and a Chitrali woollen cap that looks like a pie crust. This disguise will see the dealer past the dozens of police checkpoints leading into Pakistan's tribal territories, the jagged mountain ranges beyond the law's reach, where nearly every man is armed with a Kalashnikov AK 47. The dealer is driven for an hour or so to a high, mud-walled fortress where there are more large, bearded men with guns.

While gunmen prowl on the fortress roof, the dealer is led into a primitive, earthen-floored room with cheap, synthetic carpets and pillows. (These Afghan and Pathan antiquities smugglers may possess some of the warlords most exquisite art treasures, but you could not guess their wealth from their living conditions, they prefer to spend their money on buying cars, extra wives and the loyalty of more gunmen.) Over tea, the room's many shutters are opened to reveal lighted cabinets containing a trove of plundered items. It is not unusual to be offered third century BC gold jewellery from Graeco-Bactrian burial mounds, a silver bowl from the easternmost Greek outpost of Ai Khanoum lifesize terracotta Buddhas from the seventh century, and third century AD ivories of buxom Hindi dancers. The starting price for such antiquities is usually more than $1m. Their cultural and historical value is incalculable.

Once a price has been struck, a mat is spread out on the floor and steaming mutton served. Then, as one foreign dealer who has had the experience told me, "They take a chunk of hashish as big as my hand and toss it on the fire. You're supposed to stand up in this hashish cloud and breathe in. I'd say easily we went through a kilo that night." Light-headed after the dope, the smugglers handed out small, ancient Buddha heads and first century AD silver Kushan coins to their guests as if they were after-dinner mints.

Further along the smuggling chain, there is no shortage of sophisticated dealers in Islamabad and Europe who are prepared to buy and sell such plunder. In Islamabad, Professor AH Dani, an adviser to the Pakistan government and one of the world's greatest scholars of Gandhara Buddhist art, is frequently asked to comment on looted pieces by high-class dealers who have millionaire clients lined up in London and Tokyo. Usually, they want to know if their Peshawar contact has sold them a fake.

Professor Dani is a member of the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Architectural Heritage (SPACH), a group trying to break the chain of greed and corruption by buying back stolen treasures, with financial help from the UN. Unfortunately, as SPACH representative Brigitte Neubacher explains, "We just can't come close to the prices that most of the big dealers in Peshawar and Islamabad are demanding."

When dealers bring him pieces that are genuine, Professor Dani tries to persuade them to donate them to a museum. He rarely succeeds. "They tell me that they are saving these objects from being destroyed in Afghanistan, that their rich collectors will take care of them," he told me ruefully. Perhaps they will. But, unlike the many treasures pilfered from various peoples by 19th century European explorers, these objects will be taken care of not in the public domain of a museum, but in private, beyond the reach of scholars.

The French, in the early Twenties, were the first to realise that great archaeological treasures lay hidden inside Afghanistan's savagely beautiful deserts and mountains. For several decades, they quietly enriched their knowledge and their museums, while other Oriental scholars lobbied in vain for permission from the Afghan monarchy to dig in Afghanistan. Then, after the Second World War, the French hold on Afghanistan loosened. Italian, British, Japanese, Soviet and American expeditions all poured in. Dozens of important sites were discovered, yielding not only magnificent treasures — the largest Greek coin ever minted, for example — but also proof that, 11,000 years ago, man's earliest civilisations, along the Tigris-Euphrates rivers and in the Indus Valley, had links through Afghanistan. In Tillya-Tepe in northern Afghanistan on the Silk Route into China, Soviet archaeologists found evidence that the caravanserais were much more than simply centres of trade: they were culturally and intellectually rich societies. It seems that it was only after Buddhist artisans beheld statues of Greek gods in Afghanistan that they thought to depict Buddha in human form. (Until then, he had always been symbolised by a riderless horse, an umbrella or footprints.)

One of the most fabulous finds in Afghanistan occurred by accident. In the Fifties the women of Mir Zakah — a barren mountain village in the south-eastern province of Paktia where the farmers' only crop is cumin seeds — were complaining that they kept drawing up flaky metal lumps when they drew water from the well. A government archaeologist was dispatched from Kabul who found that the well contained a treasure trove of over 1,800kg of gold, silver and bronze coins, some dating back to fourth century BC. All of this was in due course moved to the National Museum in Kabul.

After the Afghan communist government fell in April 1993, the guards posted at Mir Zakah drifted away, and the elders of the local tribe, suspecting that there might be other treasures around the well, decided to go into business for themselves. Each family in the tribe chipped in with 50,000 rupees (about 1,000 pounds — a fortune for an Afghan). This was used to buy a tractor, a pump and generators — not to mention landmines.

Over the past three years, the people of Mir Zakah have extracted more than a ton of coins and artefacts from the well — and sold it all for a pittance. One Mir Zakah man complained recently to a visitor, "Dealers have come from Pakistan and other countries, but we've lost out on this. I've only got 30,000 rupees back so far. Some lads accuse our elders of taking our share. In these days, an elder's not an elder any more, and the mujahedin are no better than dogs."

No doubt; but the truth is that the Mir Zakah folk are clueless about the worth of the hoard. John Butt, a BBC editor based in Peshawar, recently tried to take pictures at the site. "The people were convinced that a photo was worth as much as the object itself. They don't really understand what is going on," he said. Numismatics value the Mir Zakah trove at over $60m, in its entirety. The people of Mir Zakah sold their share of the haul to dealers by the kilo.

Since then, the Afghan's willingness to smuggle anything with a glimmer of value has taken a new and dangerous turn. Having set up an underworld pipeline for weapons, heroin and antiquities going into Russia, the traders are bringing back whatever illicit goods might sell in Asia. And what sells best is nuclear equipment — some of it of weapons-making calibre — pilfered from the former Soviet republics. Reports have been circulating for some time to the effect that, since the crack-up of the USSR, nuclear material has been looted from reactors and military installations and sold on the black market. In Peshawar, those reports take on a frighteningly specific reality.

Several months ago, an American art expert from Islamabad who had come to do business in Peshawar was expecting the usual hashish odyssey into tribal lands. Instead, he was taken on a startling detour. Told by his go-between that he had something extremely valuable to show, this American — who prefers not to be identified — was still being driven through Peshawar when the Landcruiser pulled off on a muddy lane into a busy neighbourhood with fruit carts and boys playing cricket. The car halted at a large house in a crowded residential area, and the dealer was shown inside. The gunmen were there, but everything else was different. The smugglers were more tense, secretive.

Floorboards were lifted up, revealing dozens of metal strongboxes. One was opened for the puzzled westerner who, after all, had come expecting antiquities. "They had Russian writing and looked like medicine jars. Each jar contained enriched Uranium. Hidden in this house, these guys had 1,200kg of enriched uranium from the former Soviet Union which they were trying to sell. They asked me if I might know of sans buyers. They had Iranians who were interested, but they didn't like the Iranians," the art expert told me.

Although the smuggler was vague about the exact origins of the uranium, or whether or not it was of weapons-grade quality, he claimed that it had been slipped out of a high-security plant not far from Moscow, in the Ukraine, by one of the plant managers. From there, the uranium had been moved, jar by jar, along the old smuggling routes through Turkmenistan and into northern Afghanistan before it crossed the Khyber Pass into Peshawar. Some of the smugglers — the same ones who smuggle antiquities still use camels and donkey trains to cross the mountainous Khyber. As the BBC's John Butt puts it: "For centuries the Afghans have been smuggling. They love the challenge of it. It doesn't matter to them whether they're bringing in Bokhara rugs or AK-47s." Or, it now seems, nuclear weaponry.

Enriched uranium is not the only nuclear material coming down from the former communist countries. In Peshawar, contrabandists are also offering to sell other bomb-making material such as ultra-powerful magnets and catalysts and alloys used for thermo-nuclear warheads. "There are Iranian majors and colonels walking around the streets of Peshawar with Samsonite suitcases stuffed full of $100 bills," said one western antiques trader. Along with Iran, those hunting nuclear bargains in Peshawar reportedly include Pakistan and its enemy, India. All three are believed to be secretly making nuclear weapons. There is also no shortage of possible terrorist buyers: the 14 year war between the Afghan mujahedin and the Soviet- backed regime in Kabul made Peshawar a jumping-off place for religious extremists from Kashmir, Egypt, Sudan, and Algeria, many of whom are still there. And then there are the Western government spies keen to stop the ex-USSR's nuclear technology from falling into the wrong hands — just like SPACH, trying to outbid the antiquities dealers.

Some Westerners play down the danger. "A terrorist would want to buy a fully functional nuclear device," says one diplomat whose embassy in Islamabad has been approached by arms pedlars. But others admit to being concerned. "This nuclear material is supposed to be strictly controlled," another Islamabad diplomat told me, "and if the Russian mafia or somebody else is smuggling this out, then it's very serious." He added, "Many of these things being hawked around are radioactive. We're worried about a disaster."

Pakistani officials admit that Peshawar is turning into a nuclear arms bazaar, and that the source is the former Soviet Union. "Even this morning, there was someone here offering these things. They bring photographs and things, though not the material itself." General Nasrullah Babar, the interior minister said.

Nor is Peshawar the only city involved. In Mazar-e-Sharif, in northern Afghanistan, an American aid worker was approached several months ago by an Afghan who swore him to secrecy and then showed him what he claimed was enriched uranium. "He wanted to know how much it was worth," said a scientist connected with the same relief agency. "I guess how much it's worth depends on how badly someone wants it."

Like those who buy looted antiquities in Peshawar, those who buy looted nuclear weaponry are wary of fakes and swindles. Some diplomats said that Afghan traders in Ukraine, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan may have been duped into buying worthless — but highly dangerous — radioactive waste as enriched uranium.

The reckless way in which the Afghan smugglers move around and store the radioactive material is also worrying. One Western antiquities dealer reports that a trafficker boastfully pulled a matchbox full of uranium from his shirt pocket and opened it in front of him. "I told him to get it the hell away from me," he told me. Another western military expert added scornfully: "These Afghans end up irradiating themselves, then dying six months later because they don't know any better. They're crazy."

The fallout of a collapsing empire is adding to the agonies of a society whose values, and very fabric, have already been destroyed by war. Most of the Afghan antiquities unearthed by foreign archaeologists over the past 50 years used to be safeguarded in the National

Museum of Kabul: it had one of the finest collections of antiquities in Asia. With the fall of the communist regime in 1993, various mujahedin factions closed in, fighting each other for possession of Kabul. The mujahedin have been scrapping ever since, with daily rocket-fire, tanks and machine-gun fire. Much of the worst fighting has been around the museum. Inevitably, its treasures have been looted.

Dr Najib Popal, the museum's erudite director, reckons that nearly 70 per cent of the museum's finest collections have been stolen by the various factions who have controlled the battered building during the changing tides of battle. Much of what they did not steal was smashed by rockets. One shattered a majestic lion of greenish granite at the museum entrance. An unexploded shell lies beside the lion's haunches, in a shallow, watery crater, and Dr Popal warns us away. "We found 57 unexploded shells in the museum," says Dr Popal. Inside, showcases are somersaulted, and the corridors are filled with fragments of Grecian and Islamic pottery and, inexplicably, the remains of a modern lavatory.

For Dr Popal, the notion that there might be one or more criminal archaeologists telling the Afghan commanders and dealers where to dig and what to steal from the museum is not so farfetched. "When the Kabul museum was looted so many times, there must have been specialists showing the mujahedin which things to rob. There were thousands of books in the museum library. Most of the mujahedin can't read, yet all the books which had illustrations of the museum's best pieces were stolen.

"I'm also sure that the dealers and the commanders have hired archaeologists to mark different sites around the country," he added. Meanwhile, many prize pieces from the Kabul museum are turning up in the international art markets. Still unknown is the fate of 20,000 golden ornaments from the Tillya-Tepe burial mounds, once kept in the museum. The hoard is now supposed to be locked away in Kabul's bank vaults by President Burhannudin Rabbani's besieged government, but the government does not allow scholars to ascertain that the collection is still in the vaults, and dealers in Peshawar's gold bazaar claim that many baubles from Tillya-Tepe are now up for sale in Peshawar, Islamabad and London.

Driving away from the museum on roads pitted by mortars, in a rumbling Afghan taxi, Dr Popal lapsed into silence and then said quietly: "I've been feeling a pain in my heart since the museum was first burned. This museum was life for me and my friends. Now it's a cemetery."

As we drove on through miles and miles of bombed-out city streets, I saw a boy flying a kite in the devastated landscape. A mujahedin wandered up, and, with a grin, began blasting holes at the boy's airborne kite with his Kalashnikov.

A few days later, in the gardens of the bluetiled mosque in Mazar-e-Sharif, I met a young Afghan of Mongol extraction with a wispy little moustache. He was named Ahsan. He took me aside and showed me Polaroids of a stone relief of Minerva, the Greek goddess of wisdom, and a white marble statue of the Aryan sun god, Mithras. Of course they were for sale — a steal at several thousand dollars. Then, Ahsan said, "I have uranium, too." In space, he marked out an object the shape of a tool box. "Three have gone already to Peshawar. I have one box of uranium left."

Afghans will sell anything — their past, and also their future.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh: President Approves Caretaker Government Bill

BK2803130496 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in Bengali 1200 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Abdur Rahman Biswas approved the Constitutional 13th Amendment Bill 1996 at the President House today. As a result of this approval, the bill has now become law and has been incorporated into the Bangladesh Constitution. This bill was unanimously passed by the Parliament the morning of 26 March.

Among others, the bill has a provision on the formation of a neutral caretaker government, with a view to assisting the Election Commission in the free, peaceful, fair, and impartial holding of parliamentary elections. The neutral caretaker government will be headed by a chief adviser, and there will be 10 other advisers in this government. The president will appoint the chief adviser and other advisers, and they will be collectively accountable to the president. This government's term of office will be 90 days.

The caretaker government will carry out routine functions but will not make any policy decisions. The caretaker government will be dissolved on the day the prime minister takes office after the new parliament is formed. The bill also provides details regarding the qualifications of the chief adviser and other advisers and the procedure relating to their appointment.

Bangladesh: Opposition Parties Resume Noncooperation Movement

BK2803162096 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in Bengali 1500 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Opposition parties resumed their countrywide noncooperation movement today after a break of 54 hours with a view to realizing their demands. In Dhaka, rickshaws, a limited number of minivans, privately-owned minibuses, and buses of the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation have been seen on the streets since morning. Some shops and business organizations were open. The movement of transports on interdistrict routes remained suspended throughout the country.

Officials and employees of the Bangladesh Secretariat observed their sit-in program. Essential services, including the transportation of rice, vegetables, fish, meat, eggs, fruits, and other perishable items, were excluded from the noncooperation program. Vehicles carrying haj pilgrims were also exempted from the program.

Our Chittagong correspondent reports that normal civic life continued in the port city. Buses, trucks, and other vehicles operated on the streets. Vegetable markets and other small business centers were open. The attendance of officials and employees of government and semigovernment offices, autonomous organizations, mills and factories was as usual. Sources at the Chittagong Export Processing Zone said that smooth operations continued in 41 out of a total of 63 industrial units.

Our Khulna correspondent reports that the situation was calm in the city. Normal work continued in government offices, but banks and business organizations were closed. Shops and vegetable markets were open. Rickshaws and rickshaw vans operated on the streets, but there were no motor vehicles. Tanker trucks carrying fuel were exempted from the noncooperation program. Production in mills and factories was as usual, while normal work continued at Mongla Port.

Our Rajshahi correspondent says that, with the exception of rickshaws, no other vehicles were seen on the streets. The movement of trains and buses remained suspended. The opposition parties led several processions in the city.

India

India: Joint Naval Exercises With U.S. Navy Launched

BK2903064496 Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 27 Mar 96 p 7

[Report by Subhash Chakravarti]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A joint Indo-U.S. naval exercise was launched in the Arabian Sea. Codenamed Malabar, this is the third in the series, but its underwater, surface and air operation scale is the largest yet.

The outcome of this exercise will determine the next exercise which is likely to be on the eastern sea border near Malacca Straits. It will be the beginning of a greater role for India in maintaining naval vigilance for security of sea lanes serving major economies in the world.

The exercise, although planned earlier, is being held at a time when the security environment in Asia-Pacific is under fresh scrutiny following China's military manoeuvre in Taiwan Straits and the dispatch of war boats by the U.S.

India, which now, unlike China, is a full dialogue partner of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), is unlikely to be invited by the body's regional forum for discussion on security matters. India and the U.S. are not keen on divulging details of the naval exercise, presumably to avoid political controversy here. The U.S. decision to sell arms worth $365 million to Pakistan under the Brown Amendment is a contentious live issue here.

Indian newspapers prominently published a report from Washington on Tuesday according to which the U.S. Administration had assured the Democratic congressman, Mr Gary Ackerman, that there were no immediate plans to proceed with the arms transfer to Pakistan.

The scale of underwater, surface and air combatants being used in the exercise, shows it is a fairly serious exchange of expertise. The U.S. Navy has deployed a nuclear powered submarine to acquaint the Indian Navy of this particular vessel. The Indian Navy has no nuclear submarine.

The U.S. Navy has deployed P-3c Orion aircraft, although the U.S. is committed to sell them to Pakistan. The U.S. Navy is due to fire guided missiles from its ships to review the range and operational target reach of the weapons, which set the pace for new strategic calculations in the Gulf war.

India is close to developing, if not deploying, its own missiles. Destroyers and frigates account for the bulk of the U.S. deployment on surface. It is not known if the submarine will fire guided missiles. The Indian Navy has deployed conventional submarine, maritime patrol, aircraft, destroyers and frigates. The U.S. nuclear submarine will join the exercise in deep sea.

The exercise will largely concentrate on anti-surface vessel warfare and anti-air warfare. India has lately held joint exercises with other regional navies as well. A forth night ago, India and Singapore held a joint naval exercise at Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam.

India: Russia's Primakov To Pay Official Visit 30 Mar

BK2903020896 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Russian foreign minister, Mr. Yevgeniy Primakov, will pay a two-day official visit to India from Saturday [30 March]. He will be the first Russian foreign minister to do so after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. During his stay, he will have extensive discussions with the external affairs minister, Mr. Parnab Mukherjee, on bilateral and international issues. He will also call on the president, the vice president, and the prime minister. Three agreements are expected to be signed during the visit. These include the setting up of a hot line between Kremlin and the prime minister's office in New Delhi, Indo- Russian scientific and technical cooperation till the turn of the century, and cultural cooperation agreement for two years.

India: Commentary Hails 'Diplomatic Coup' at Disarmament Meet

BK2803141896 Delhi All India Radio General Overseas Service in English 1010 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Commentary by M.K. Kaul]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sunday [24 March] last witnessed nothing less than a diplomatic coup in Geneva at ongoing disarmament conference. India and some other nonnuclear developing countries have a reason to be happy about it for it was brought about by them. What is important about the development is that nuclear powers' synergic efforts to push the text of new Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT] through the disarmament conference only three months ahead of the June deadline stands thwarted. Indian Foreign Secretary Salman Haider's forceful plea against rushing through the CTBT without [words indistinct] of a vast number of nonnuclear states did cut ice and the juggernaut of treaty got stalled. Had it not been so, the move of the nuclear powers would have led to new CTBT — acronym that the treaty has come to be known as in popular parlance. It was aimed at only freezing nuclear tests by threshold states.

India's age-old ethos for a tension-free world are too well-known to need repetition. Some of its critics do try to lambaste its efforts toward peace as hypocritical and try to question India's genuineness about its quest for peace. It is just an effort to show the country in the bad light for compulsions of their own. Why India refused to be signatory to the [nuclear] Non-Proliferation Treaty and now is opposed to the CTBT? To put it in the most simple words, it is discriminatory to the core; as is the NPT, as nonproliferation treaty is known. India's representative at Geneva, Ms. Arundhuti Ghosh, has in fact earlier set out essential conditions for India's approval for the CTBT. These are just two conditions: One, all forms of testing, explosive and nonexplosive, must be banned; two, obligations under the CTBT must be linked to obligations on the five nuclear weapon powers to disarm. What does it mean? India is seeking a disarmament dimension; wants the nuclear powers' capabilities not only capped out but reduced according to a fixed timetable.

The United States and its cohorts, which have been preaching NPT and now CTBT, have two interests. They want freezing of the nuclear status quo between the weapon powers — and thus ensuring the U.S. and their supremacy — and then they are keen to cap the nuclear programs of threshold states like India and Pakistan, which are not signatories to the NPT, and thereby prevent the unraveling of two and a half decade old regime. India's nuclear policy has never been China or Pakistan-specific, as at times it is no doubt to be the case. India developed its nuclear capability as a part of its broader quest for sophistication in science and technology; also to exploit it for peaceful purposes to better the economic lot of its people. India's nuclear options did, of course, take the cognizance of the concomitant existence of nuclear weapons on this planet. To counter such destructive weaponry system, it did not take the course of stockpiling of nuclear arsenals. What it did was taking the initiative for diplomatic dialogue against such pernicious warfare systems. It did it despite the fact the country had shown its capabilities of producing nuclear warheads when it for the first and the only time exploded nuclear device in 1974, which the history has recorded as the Pokaran atomic test.

The basic idea underlying its move for the diplomatic initiative against the nuclear power devices has been average Indian's innate quest for peaceful coexistence. India always hoped that good sense would ultimately prevail and that nuclear powers would eventually work out a realistic time-bound program for a gradual but total elimination of nuclear weapons. India has in fact been one of the ardent supporters of CTBT but not on the terms of nuclear haves which would like to put even peaceful uses of nuclear technology of developing countries in a freeze without putting any control on their own existing or future development of nuclear weaponry. One cannot help recalling India's permanent representative at the United Nations Prakash Shah's recent statement at Washington, when he said, I quote, once we have put in place the CTBT as a true disarmament instrument which freezes all countries in their present nuclear status and stops further development of nuclear weapons, it will instantly be followed by other disarmament measures, such as negotiating a conference on disarmament in Geneva, a conventional nonuse or threat of the use of nuclear weapons, I unquote. No one with sanity can dispute it, but what the problem is that nuclear powers club would like to pay lip sympathy to the cause of humanity. While as a British monarch once counseled his advisers to have faith in God but keep the powder dry, how does one expect India to fall into such a trap?

India: National Conference Not To Contest Elections in Kashmir

BK2903093396 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The National Conference has decided not to contest the coming Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir. A consensus decision of the working committee of the party was announced by the party president, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, in Jammu today. Addressing a news conference, Dr. Abdullah said the National Conference is not against elections, but it feels that the ground situation is not yet conducive for holding free and fair elections in the state. He made it clear that his party is not opposing or boycotting the elections, and members of the party are free to vote or support any candidates of their personal choice.

India: Regulatory Body Proposed To Oversee Broadcasting

BK2903102796 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The subcommittee of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on national media policy has recommended setting up a regulatory body to oversee public and private broadcasting and telecasting in the country. The subcommittee, in its working paper submitted to the chairman of the Consultative Committee in New Delhi today, noted that the provisions of the Prasar Bharati Act [Indian Broadcasting Corporation Act] should be kept in mind while framing the regulatory mechanism. This apex body will control and regulate the use of airwave.

The subcommittee said that foreign satellite channels must also be brought within the ambit of the autonomous body in order to make them amenable to Indian laws. In another important recommendation, the subcommittee said that the government should frame the national film policy as early as possible. It recommended that the film industry may be declared an industry not only for the purpose of institutional finance but also for application of labor legislation.

India: CPI Releases 'New Alternative' Election Manifesto

BK2703162996 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 27 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The CPI [Communist Party of India] manifesto for the coming elections to work for providing a new alternative to the people comprising left, secular, and democratic forces. The manifesto was released by the party general secretary, Mr. Indrajit Gupta, in New Delhi today. It promises new policies to promote the public sector and small and medium industries, allocation of 50 percent of the budget for development of agriculture and allied sectors, and speedy implementation of land reforms and distribution of surplus land to agricultural workers.

The manifesto says though economic reforms are needed to end bureaucratic controls and red tapeism, the policies of liberalization and privatization must be reversed. It says foreign investments and multinationals should be allowed only in areas needing high technology and resources.

The manifesto pledges to make the right to work a fundamental right, to provide food security to all, and cover rural and urban workers under social security and labor welfare measures. It says a special court should be set up in each sensitive district to try cases of atrocities against the people belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes and women.

The manifesto promises to make efforts to extend the policy of reservation to the private sector. Calling for fighting corruption at all levels, the manifesto highlights the need for setting up lokpal [ombudsman] institutions at the center and in the state.

On restructuring center-state relations, it promises to give greater powers and resources to the states and to revive the inter-state council. The manifesto says autonomy should be guaranteed to tribal majority areas and pledges to take steps to form a separate state of Uttarakhand.

The party is to contest about 50 seats in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

India: Electoral Alliance in Tamil Nadu Said 'Unacceptable'

BK2903031296 Madras THE HINDU in English 28 Mar 96

[Report by B. Muralidhar Reddy — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] New Delhi, March 27 — The Congress high command tonight made the formal announcement about revival of electoral ties with the AIADMK [All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] for the general and Assembly elections scheduled in the State on April 27 and May 2 even as dominant faction of the State unit led by Mr. G. K. Moopanar rejected the arrangement as "unacceptable".

The announcement about revival of the alliance came after the Congress Working Committee (CWC) adopted late on Tuesday [26 March] night a formal resolution to the effect that electoral understanding with the AIADMK "is the right course". Disclosure about the formal adoption of the resolution by the CWC has come as a surprise as the Congress had maintained on Monday and Tuesday that Mr. Rao had only called informal meetings of the CWC.

The AICC [All-India Congress Committee] spokesman, Mr. V. N. Gadgil, who released the text of the CWC resolution disclosed that as per the arrangement the Congress would contest 29 of the 39 Lok Sabha seats in Tamil Nadu and leave the rest of 10 to the AIADMK as opposed to 28 it had contested in 1991 in alliance with the AIADMK. The lone Lok Sabha seat in Pondicherry will also be contested by the Congress.

However, the seat adjustments between the two parties for the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry are as per the arrangement in 1991.

The Congress will put up candidates in 66 of the 234 Assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu and 10 of the 30 in Pondicherry.

"No comments" was the cryptic comment of Mr. Moopanar when contacted for reaction to the announcement made by the AICC. Though Mr. Moopanar preferred to maintain silence, his supporters appeared to be in a defiant mood. A group of young lawyers from Tamil Nadu could be seen sitting on dharna [sit-in] outside the AICC headquarters to register their protest against the high command decision.

According to sources, the Moopanar group expressed its outright opposition to the alliance and refused to have any parleys with the two emissaries of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha, who flew down from Madras by a special aircraft on Tuesday night to formalise the deal. Ultimately the two emissaries had to leave without meeting the Tamil Nadu Congress leaders.

Efforts were on by senior leaders of the party on behalf of the Congress president, Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, throughout the day to persuade Mr. Moopanar to accept the alliance but till late tonight they have not met with any success. Indications are that Mr. Moopanar would take a decision on the future course of action of his group after consultations with his supporters in Tamil Nadu. He is expected to leave for Madras in a day or two.

The central leadership is worried over the prospect of some of the key supporters of Mr. Moopanar opting out of the poll fray as a protest against the decision to revive the alliance. "What is the purpose of contesting the election and getting defeated", remarked a close supporter of Mr. Moopanar. Implied in the comment of the party leader is the suspicion that the AIADMK leadership would work to ensure the defeat of the Congress leaders who had worked against the alliance.

The two emissaries of Ms. Jayalalitha were closeted with senior Congress leaders, Mr. Sharad Pawar, Mr. Devendra Dwivedi, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee and Mr. Janardhana Poojary at the residence of the Prime Minister on Tuesday night and discussed the broad details of the alliance.

The following is the text of the resolution adopted by the CWC.

"The main issues on which the forthcoming Lok Sabha election will be contested are: political stability, rapid economic growth, social and economic justice, communal and social harmony and national integrity.

"The Indian National Congress is not only the nation's prime political organisation but the only party which has its presence in every part of the country. The so-called alternatives have only regional or fragmented presence. Tamil Nadu has always occupied a pride of place in the life of the nation. Many stalwarts the country has produced are from Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

"During elections in the past two decades, the Congress Party has made local adjustment, keeping in view the political situation in the State. This strategy in Tamil Nadu has proved to be in the larger interests of the nation as well as the State and the people of Tamil Nadu.

"The challenges before the country are many and therefore, the Congress Party in the larger interests of national politics and of the people of Tamil Nadu has decided to have an electoral arrangements in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry with the AIADMK in the impending elections. The Congress Party, after a thorough examination of all the alternatives suggested in this connection and evaluating their political implications and acceptability, has come to the conclusion that this is the right course.

"The arrangement is confined to the adjustment of seats for the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry and the same will be without any detriment to the accepted policies and commitments of the Indian National Congress."

India: Congress-I Spokesman on Opposition to Alliance With AIADMK

BK2903132296 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Congress-I spokesman, Mr. V.N. Gadgil, has maintained that some party men's opposition to the alliance with the AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Munetra Kazhagam] in Tamil Nadu is a natural reaction and will subside soon. Replying to queries by newsmen, he said the party high command will consider the matter if any resolution is passed at the meeting of party workers in Madras. Mr. Gadgil said that the Congress-I is not having any seat adjustment talks with the BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party].

The senior Congress-I leader, Mr. G.K. Moopanar, said in Madras today that the Congress-I-AIADMK alliance for the ensuing general elections is not acceptable to him. Addressing party workers, he said that he will not campaign for the alliance.

India: Rao Gives 'Nod' for Revival of AIADMK, Congress Alliance

BK2903065896 Delhi THE HINDUSTAN TIMES in English 28 Mar 96 p 13

[Editorial: "Jaya Above Party"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Brushing aside the majority opinion of party men in Tamil Nadu, Mr Narasimha Rao has given his nod for revival of the Congress alliance with AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam], using the facade of an informal CWC [Congress Working Committee] meeting to give the decision greater acceptability. All indications point to the fact that the party chief had made up his mind much before the lobbying for and against a deal with Ms Jayalalitha was allowed in Delhi to dispel the impression of any imposition. Whether it was based on any intelligence assessment of the gains accruing to the Congress in terms of Lok Sabha seats or the lady's persuasive skills, Mr Rao found it difficult to win over the dominant group led by Mr G.K. Moopanar, which wanted the party to either go it alone or team up with the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam]. Mr Moopanar was rightly exercised over not only the propriety of aligning with a party that the Congress has been roundly denouncing as corrupt and fascist but the impossibility of enthusing party men to work for its success. But with his eyes set on cornering the majority of the 39 Lok Sabha seats at stake in the State, and convinced somehow that only Ms Jayalalitha could deliver it to the Congress, Mr Rao remained impervious to all other considerations. The CWC imprimatur is calculated to ensure that other implacable opponents of the deal, notably Union Ministers P. Chidambaram and M. Arunachalam, are also made to fall in line in the name of party discipline.

The week-long suspense, which gave hope to the DMK and kept the AIADMK on tenterhooks, has had the effect of denting the image of both as Dravidian parties that could hope to beat each other only with Congress support. This might enable Mr Rao to extract a larger share of Lok Sabha seats for the Congress than what he could have hoped to get under the old MGR [M.G. Ramachandran — former chief minister of Tamil Nadu] formula that gave two-thirds to the Congress and an equal proportion to the AIADMK in the Assembly. But an increase in the Congress quota can be counted as a gain only if it is translated into victories. While the chief minister could be trusted to do her bit, because of her equal stakes in putting the Congress in power in Delhi again, the same cannot be said of congressmen bitterly opposed to her. The possibility of some of them rooting for the DMK as a better alternative cannot be ruled out. The disaffection in the Congress is bound to aggravate in case Ms Jayalalitha is seen to exercise her prerogative in finalising the Congress list, weeding out candidates who had lobbied against her. Mr Karunanidhi could still steal a march over the rival contenders in case the Dalits angered at the domination of pro-AIADMK. The wars gravitate towards the DMK and matinee idol Rajnikant also joins the campaign along with the MGR front of R.M. Veerappan. Having squandered away this option mooted by the super star, best equipped to counter Ms Jayalalitha's appeal, the Congress has lost a golden chance to discard the Kazhagam crutch and capitalise on the efforts made to forge an independent identity.

Iran

Iran: Ayatollah Emami-Kashani Delivers Friday Prayers

LD2903111996 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran Provincial Network in Persian 0805 GMT 29 Mar 96

[Friday prayers led by Ayatollah Mohammad Emami-Kashani, member of the Guardian Council, in Tehran — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. [passage omitted]

I want to start my debate by saying that the sacred system of the Islamic Republic can prove itself to the world — as it has done so far — only if it sticks to all Islamic tenets and what Islam has brought for societies and the other-worldly existence of humans. [passage omitted]

The Islamic world of today has attracted the attention of the world. A German person has written an article analyzing relations between Europe and Iran, and also the issue of America and its hostility. This article, which is written in German and I have only read a translation, is very illuminating indeed.

The article says: Europe cannot oppose Iran, because this would mean opposition to Islam and it is not in Europe's interest to confront Islam. This is because Islam has many followers the world over, and if Europe opposes Islam, then it will hurt the sentiments of world Muslims and alienate them. This does not serve the economic interests of the Europeans, while at the same time, it is not socially and politically beneficial for them. [passage omitted]

Europe, therefore, says America is wrong. This is, of course, my interpretation. In other words, I think it [the United States] is trying to do something utterly futile, because its attitude means opposition to Islam and its ideology.

Yesterday, we heard from our radio that the prime minister of the Zionist regime had said: Our arch enemy is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Then he added: America is against Iran, because it understands what this country is all about.

The truth of the matter is that America does not understand. What we face here is the American government, because the American nation is pretty helpless in this situation. They, of course, understand that the Zionist regime is an illegal entity, which the Muslims should oppose, because with this opposition, Israel cannot continue its occupation.

The fact is the American government and some members of its misled parliament, who seek to further the interests of the Zionists and are also trying to sell the American nation, are fully aware that Islam is a reality. They also know that it was Israel that kicked Muslims out of their lands and made them refugees, and is still killing them every day or taking them as prisoners. This is clear for them.

However, my analysis is that this will lead to America's downfall. I would like to say that America's downfall will be on that score. That is, the situation in America — the conditions of which the U.S. administration has brought upon itself — is that it has become a tool in the hands of Zionism, it has become in line with the unlawful regime occupying Jerusalem, and alongside it, is moving against the Muslim ummah and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Its support for Israel will crush it and it is happening now. The political giant, the economic giant, that we see, that is America, despite everything, the downfall of the White House and the system of the United States of America will be the result of its support for the regime occupying Jerusalem. [crowd chants: "God is great," "Khamene'i is the leader," "Death to America"] [passage omitted]

I wish to say something about the forthcoming Hajj pilgrimage before concluding the sermons. The dear pilgrims of God's House should realize that Hajj is the place of worship and communication with God. In that place, the pilgrims should pray for themselves and the Iranian nation. The Iranian nation is watching you to see how you stretch hands of worship to Almighty God. We should value this great honor. We should not waste our time and should say prayers in every spare moment. We should pay attention there to all the political and social instructions of Islam and its message.

What is the message of Islam? Disavowal of infidels and confrontation with them. On the other hand, the message of Islam says we must offer a hand of friendship to other members of the Islamic community and the friends of Islam.

Finally, I wish to honor the memory of Grand Ayatollah Borujerdi [Shi'i, source of emulation who died in April 1961] on the coming anniversary of his demise. [passage omitted]

May God's peace and mercy be upon you all.

Iran: Sharm al-Shaykh Follow-Up Meeting Election 'Gimmick' by Clinton

NC2803194796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1740 GMT 28 Mar 96

[News Analysis]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Sharm al-Shaykh conference follow-up committee will meet in Washington today. Security experts from 29 countries will participate in this meeting to discuss the so-called ways of confronting terrorism. The follow-up committee meeting is not expected to achieve any noteworthy results in light of the failure of the Sharm al-Shaykh Conference itself. That conference, which was held under the title of the Summit of Peacemakers, failed to achieve any results on the road to fighting terrorism.

Political observers are watching with interest U.S. President Bill Clinton's goal for holding this meeting in Washington. With only seven months remaining until the U.S. presidential elections, Clinton has intensified his efforts to attract Jewish votes to win the presidential office for the second time. Clinton, who has surpassed his predecessors in maintaining very close relations with the Jews and the Zionist entity, is trying to salvage the so-called Middle East peace process from its current impasse to attract Zionist quarters' support in the next presidential elections. These Zionist quarters fund the largest share of Bill Clinton's presidential campaign expenses.

In any case, political observers believe the new gimmick by Clinton under the title of the Washington meeting on combating terrorism is merely a step to strengthen the position of the Democratic Party against the Republican Party in the U.S. presidential elections.

On the other hand, all the European countries participating in the Washington meeting are pursuing their own goals, which differ from the U.S. goals. This will scatter views and prevent an agreement on a common goal. In addition, the ambiguity that surrounds the criteria for terrorism is prompting each country to define this phenomenon according to its own interests. Hence, we find that the United States and the Zionist entity alone attach the label of terrorism to the revolutionary actions carried out by the Palestinians to liberate their country from the Zionists, while the remaining countries reject this description. These countries consider the organized terrorist acts carried out by the Zionist entity a criterion for terrorism. In this atmosphere, it is not expected that the Washington meeting will deal objectively with the problem of terrorism. This meeting is doomed to failure.

Iran: Tehran 'Not Pessimistic' on Sharm al-Shaykh Follow-up

MM2803145696 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 28 Mar 96 p 7

[Report by Walid Shuqayr in Beirut: "Iranian Diplomatic Source Tells AL—HAYAH: Tehran Is Not Pessimistic About the Washington Meetings, Because Europe Will Not Forego $10 Billion"]

[FBIS Translated Text] An Iranian diplomatic source has told AL-HAYAH that Tehran is not pessimistic about the Washington meetings of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit's follow-up committee, its subsequent meetings, and its resolutions against Iran, because Europe's interests are independent of the United States. "They agree on the approach to peace and support for Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres, but disagree on confronting Iran and adopting measures against it on the pretext of terrorism."

The source said that "talk of the Americans giving Iran the opportunity to adjust its position between the Sharm al-Shaykh summit and the Washington meetings is a sort of ploy and political terrorism. There is no reason why we should reassess our policy. We have made our position clear with regard to the unfounded terrorism accusations against us. The Europeans asked the Americans to produce evidence, but Washington did not. If it had had any evidence, it would have produced it."

The source added: "It boils down to the U.S. Administration looking for an excuse to convince Europe that it faces an Iranian threat, after the removal of the excuse of the Soviet threat, and thus to regain its influence."

The Iranian diplomatic source in Beirut believes that "by U.S.-Israeli standards, the Sharm al-Shaykh summit was a failure, because the European states managed to adjust their approach toward Iran and the so-called Iranian terrorism. Washington had to change the name of the conference and its agenda, lest it face an abject failure. Some of the things that happened during the Sharm al-Shaykh summit indicate that the accusations against Iran are unfounded, and show that the financing of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and the Islamic organizations is done on an international scale. Peres himself said that the biggest source of funding is from Britain."

The source said: "They accuse us of encouraging the operations against the occupation, but the financing of the opponents to the peace takes place via Jordan.... It has been proved that these accusations of encouraging and financing them are unfounded. The talk of Iran hampering the peace is unfounded. We have maintained and declared our positions toward the peace. Does declaring a position on it mean hampering it? As President Hashemi-Rafsanjani said, if it is true that the position of a state such as Iran can change a peace process for which the whole world is meeting, then this means that we should be given the importance we deserve."

The source said Washington and Israel "were hoping the Sharm al-Shaykh summit would adopt collective resolutions against Iran, like those against Libya, but the Europeans did not agree. We do not expect such resolutions now, because Europe decided on its options before the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. Some of its leaders criticize us as a maneuver to ease some of the U.S. pressure on them."

He went on: "What else can the Americans do? In the past they were unable to put pressure on the European states, so they secured a Congress resolution to punish European companies that cooperate with us. This means that if (the French oil company) Total wants to set up a project with us they will put pressure on it despite the fact that their interests dictate that they deal with us. That is why it is difficult to enforce such pressure. The published figures show that the volume of European trade and investments in Iran amounts to about $10 billion per year for Europe."

On German pressures such as issuing a warrant against the Iranian information minister and Italian statements toward Iran, he said: "These are political decisions which were made to avoid U.S. pressure. The question is: Will Europe relinquish its economic interests in Iran? The Washington follow-up meetings are like a gavel which the United States is banging on the table for those who do not follow its policy and Israel's. Maybe there is an element of pressure on Syria for rejecting the Israeli conditions for resuming the negotiations. There is no reason why the Europeans should agree with Washington's policy on the new Middle East even if they agree with it on peace. Washington wants to reshape it after gaining complete control of it, and then close its doors. This is not in the interests of Europe, which is fighting U.S. policy on Algeria, the Gulf, Iraq, Lebanon, and others. Hence, any resolutions which might result from the follow-up meetings could just as well have been issued by the Sharm al-Shaykh summit."

On the appeasement efforts in south Lebanon and Syrian contacts with Iran in this context, the source said: "The rumors that Hizballah's operations are due to regional circumstances have been categorically denied by the resistance itself. What is happening is that Israel is using the south as an arena to serve Peres' electoral interests. There was no escalation in the south, only operations inside Israel which wanted to export the crisis it has caused outside, and which resorted to intimidation and threats in the south when no new resistance operations have taken place there. What do the Hamas operations in Israel have to do with Lebanon?"

Iran: Sources Allege Iran Buying Uranium From Russian Diplomats

MS2803135196 London INDEPENDENT in English 28 Mar 96 p 11

[Report by Tim McGirk: "Iranians 'Buying ex-Soviet Uranium'"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Peshawar — Iran is reported to have bought enriched uranium from Russian diplomats based in Mazar-e-Sharif, in northern Afghanistan, according to Western diplomatic sources.

The enriched uranium is part of a lethal hoard of strategic nuclear equipment that is being plundered from high security installations in the former Soviet republics and smuggled down to Afghanistan and the Pakistani frontier city of Peshawar, as revealed in THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY this weekend.

This enriched uranium bought secretly by Iran two months ago — was pilfered by underpaid security guards at a nuclear plant in Kazakstan as part of their "bonus". From Central Asia it was transported in lead cylinders to Mazar-e-Sharif. The enriched uranium, used to make atomic bombs was peddled to the Iranians by Russian diplomats based in Mazar-e-Sharif, a city under the control of an Afghan warlord, General Abdulrashid Dostum.

Mazar-e-Sharif is just a transit point on the nuclear smuggling route. Some Western diplomats are alarmed that the Russians have a huge consulate of 52 staff there. The main destination for nuclear wares is increasingly, Peshawar. There, nuclear salesmen, usually Afghans, are offering to sell such dangerous contraband as enriched uranium, super-powerful magnets, catalysts, and alloys for making the shells of thermo-nuclear warheads.

This lethal nuclear contraband is coming down the same trans-Asia pipeline used by Afghans to move guns, heroin and looted Buddha statues, some worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, through Moscow and into Europe. Few Afghan smugglers now holding this nuclear material are aware of its radioactive effects.

In Washington, the CIA director, John Deutch, expressed concern over the threat of "loose nukes" being smuggled out of the former Soviet Union. He said that since the collapse of the USSR, the Russians' ability to maintain tight control over their nuclear facilities had slackened.

According to the CIA Iran is secretly building up its own nuclear weapons programme and is a leading buyer of the contraband. In Peshawar, one Westerner in contact with the dealers talks of "Iranian colonels and majors walking around with Samsonite suitcases full of $100 bills, who are shopping for this stuff".

Other keen buyers are Iraq North Korea, Libya, and possibly Pakistan, all suspected of making nuclear weapons. The other interested shoppers are Western governments who are anxious to stop the former Soviet Unions's pilfered nuclear technology from being grabbed by terrorist groups.

One Western diplomat in the Pakistan capital, Islamabad remarked: "This material is supposed to be strictly controlled, and if the Russian mafia or somebody else is smuggling this out, then it's very serious. Many of these things being hawked around are radioactive. We're worried about a disaster. Not only is this dangerous to the individuals who are moving it around, but there's also potential for a terrorist group buying up bits and pieces."

The prospect of terrorists acquiring A-bomb equipment in Peshawar is not the far-fetched stuff of spy novels. Islamic extremists from many countries used Peshawar as a base from 1979 onwards during the Afghan jihad, or holy war, against the Soviet forces. Even after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, many Muslim extremists stayed on. Under pressure from foreign governments, the Pakistani prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, has tried to expel these Islamic revolutionaries but many of them simply vanished across the border into lawless Afghanistan.

"Contrary to what Tom Clancy writes, it's not that easy to dismantle and sell off a nuclear weapon. As far as we know, that isn't available in Peshawar — not yet, anyway," said a military expert at one Islamabad embassy approached by Afghan nuclear salesmen.

Often, antiquities smugglers run a sideline in nuclear merchandise. One Western art expert, who was expecting to see plundered antiquities from Afghanistan, instead was shown a 1,200kg stash of enriched uranium. It was hidden under the floorboards of a house in a residential area of Peshawar. The uranium came in 5kg lead cylinders that resembled "medicine jars". He said: "I got the impression that these smugglers didn't know how to handle the stuff at all."

A strategic steel alloy — used in making atomic submarine hulls as well as nuclear bomb casings — is also now being peddled in Peshawar by a Russian engineer. The Russian claims that the alloy has been brought down through Turkmenistan into Afghanistan along the old smuggling routes. From there it was transported across the mountain pass of Parachinar into Pakistan's tribal territories.

General Nasrullah Babar the Pakistan interior minister, admitted that his government was approached by smugglers bearing nuclear shopping lists. "A lot of these items are coming out [of the former Soviet Union]. Even this morning there was someone here offering these things. They bring photographs and things, and we ask experts to look at the material and the Russian writing. But when we ask them to bring it, they don't," he said.

Some diplomats are worried that Afghan traders may have been tricked by nuclear suppliers in the former Soviet republics into purchasing worthless — but highly radioactive — "nuclear rubbish". One Western military expert said: "These Afghans end up irradiating themselves, and then dying six months later. They're crazy."

Often, Western embassies are the target of hoaxers. "They show us a polaroid of some cylinders and they say: 'Give us $5m. We know you want it.' But when we ask for samples, they refuse. For all we know, it could be just radioactive waste scooped off the rubbish heap of some Russian hospital." The diplomat added wearily: "But we have to check it all out. The consequences are too dire."

Western embassies in Islamabad claim that Pakistan is helpless to stop these nuclear traders because their long, mountainous border with Afghanistan cannot be sealed off. One diplomat said, "These Afghans are real entrepreneurs. They want money, and they don't care if somebody like a terrorist dumps this radioactive material into the water supply or makes it into a bomb."

Iran: Daily Criticizes U.S. Interests in Caspian Region

NC2803195696 Mashhad KHORASAN in Persian 11 Mar 96 pp 1, 15

[Part one of a two-part political commentary: ("'Oil—Politics and Threats'—on the Sidelines of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Minister's Visit to the Caucasus and Azerbaijan")]

[FBIS Translated Text] The linking of the oil issue with politics in the Caucasian region in such an overt manner has revealed the threat to our country's national security. The incidents of the past few years, especially the political-military crises in the northern littoral area of the Caspian Sea, including the Caucasian region, and the tendency in a number of newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union to act independently in using the Caspian Sea's oil resources as well as in their manner of exporting it to the outside world has generated a series of actions and reactions that can ultimately be construed as detrimental to Iran's national security.

Until yesterday, the whole world's attention was focused on the Persian Gulf region as it is one of the most important jugular veins for the production and export of oil. This strategic attention continues even now. However, the U.S. actions on the northern shores of the Caspian Sea and in the Caucasus regarding collaboration in the field of oil, as well as the oil production figures in this part of the world—which are not very different from that of the Persian Gulf oil production figures—indicate that the world's strategic oil regions now stretch from the Persian Gulf to the Caucasus and Azerbaijan.

When we mention the link between political and military crises and oil in the region as an element that threatens national security, discussion of such a potential problem would not be irrational. In fact it would be an objective example that would clearly confirm the above statement.

The U.S. long-term plot to dominate the strategic Caucasian region was hatched a few years ago with the erupting of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis. Ever since it has continued in an organized and sequential manner. We will cite a few representative examples of the political and military events that coincided with oil-related incidents. But first, we wish to state that we do not intend to make any particular statement by doing so, but to present the link between oil and politics!

—The Russian forces attacked Dudayev's forces in Chechnya—which held the government of the country in their hands for three continuous years—at a time when a major accord on oil had been signed between Baku and the West only a month earlier.

—After the signing of a major oil accord between Baku and the West of which Turkey was considered one of the biggest and most important of the participants, Ankara attacked the secessionist Kurds in order to acquire some routes to transport oil from the Republic of Azerbaijan to the West.

—Following the signing of a draft agreement on the transport of oil from the Caspian Sea via Russia by Moscow officials, Chechen military activist Basayev embarked on a hostage-taking venture in (Dubennovsk)

—Two days before Tansu Ciller was to visit Georgia to sign a cooperation agreement on the Caspian Sea oil pipeline, an attempt was made against Shevardnadze.

—Precisely on the day that Moscow television announced Baku's decision to select a "Western route" (instead of via Iran and Russia) as one of the two ways for the transit of oil to the West, Azerbaijan's airplanes strafed Chechen villages.

The above instances are a minor part of the subliminal but close link between oil-related issues and political issues, which is confirmed by the fact that during the past few years the United States and Israel have overtly sought to increase their presence and foothold in the region more each day! An example is Israel's efforts to achieve a greater presence in the countries of the Caucasus and in Azerbaijan, which was vehemently criticized in the recent visit by the Iranian foreign minister to Baku.

According to U.S. Congressional representatives, since the Persian Gulf war—which the United States fought in order to safeguard the source of its energy supply and to dominate the world's oil arteries—now, after the war, this area has stretched to the Caucasus, Siberia, and Kazakhstan. Oil production figures in this region fully affirm the motivation behind this U.S. policy.

As an example, Russia was the only country that produced 9 million barrels per day and was considered the world's largest oil producer until 1991. As is evident, the major part of its oil was produced in the Caucasus and Siberia. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1988, this country produced 12.6 million barrels per day. Now in view of the economic stagnation in this part of the world there has been a temporary slump in its oil production. The cumulative production of oil in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Russia is currently estimated to be only 7 million barrels per day.

There is no doubt that the tempting conditions concerning oil in these regions cannot fail to be important for the United States, which has made a massive political and military investment in order to dominate the world's main oil arteries. This is why today the U.S. officials—who did not have any kind of presence in the Caucasus and the north of the Caspian Sea until a short time ago—are talking about their presence and interests in these regions as if they have had a right to this area's soil and water for years.

A senior U.S. State Department officials aired his opinion on this, saying: All countries should know and there should be no misunderstanding (!) that Washington will fully defend the interests of its oil companies in the Caspian Sea with all its strength.

Iran: Foreign Ministry Expresses 'Regret' Over UAE Statements

LD2803133296 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 28 Mar 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Yesterday, Wednesday 27 March, the spokesman for the the Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Ministry expressed regret over the recent statements of the deputy foreign minister of the UAE [United Arab Emirates] on Iran's nuclear center. Mr. Sayf Sa'id Bin-Sa'id in a rapid statement has said that the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear reactor, which is under construction, was creating concern.

The emphasis of Mr. Mahmud Mohammadi, spokesman for the Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Ministry, on the issue that Iran is one of the first signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and among the countries active in cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], is itself indicative that the authorities of the UAE have made a rapid evaluation in this respect.

What is more surprising than any other thing for the experts in nuclear issues is that these types of Arab authorities ignore the Zionist regime's nuclear arsenals. Arsenals that seriously threaten the security of the entire Middle East and North Africa. And this is while the Islamic Republic of Iran has presented a proposal to clear the Middle East from nuclear weapons, to related international circles.

The spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, in a communique issued in Tehran on this occasion, correctly brings up the issue that accusations against a country that is always willing to create cooperation and to stabilize peace and security in the region is not only not befitting for a Muslim and neighbor country, but it is the repetition of useless statements which are brought up once in a while by the Zionist regime and the U.S. Government to undermine the world public opinion.

It is clear that the nuclear installations under construction in Iran are taking place for peaceful purposes and under the supervision and approved laws of the IAEA. Therefore, it would be natural if it is not influenced by the adverse propaganda of Zionist circles. But what is expected from the regional countries is that they stand beside Iran in a realistic evaluation and use all their efforts to eliminate the danger of the Zionist regime's nuclear weapons which, based on information, it has stored 200 to 300 nuclear bombs, ready to use against the Arab world, in its nuclear arsenals.

Iran: Rain Causes 10 Billion Rials Damage in Central Province

LD2803133196 Tehran IRNA in English 1242 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Arak, Central Prov., March 28, IRNA — Residential units and infrastructural establishments in this central provincial city have suffered rls. 10 billion [Rials] in damage as a result of the recent torrential rainfalls.

Head of the provincial natural disasters headquarters 'Ali Parvizi said here Thursday that out of the total, rls. three billion were inflicted on residential units, rls. two billion on animal husbandry sector, rls. two billion on farmlands and rls. three billion on infrastructural installations, including bridges and roads.

The provincial cities of Arak, Saveh, Sarband, Tafresh and Khomeyn suffered the major part of the damage, the official added.

The rainfall in the Central Province in the past week amounted to about 100 mm.

Pakistan

Pakistan: Spokesman Comments on Kashmir Elections, Afghan Agreement

BK2803143196 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Pakistan has asked for plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations in Kashmir for a permanent peaceful settlement of the issue. A Foreign Office spokesman, while briefing newsmen in Islamabad today, said the All Parties Hurriyat Conference has rejected the Indian-designed elections in occupied Kashmir. He said the elections cannot be a substitute to the plebiscite under the UN supervision. The spokesman regretted that the Indian authorities have started resorting to worst kind of atrocities and the latest example is the killing of Jalil Andrabi.

Discussing the situation in Afghanistan, the spokesman said that an agreement between two Afghan factions has no bearing on Pakistan's foreign policy. The spokesman said Pakistan has recently signed an agreement with Oman for the demarcation of oceanic boundaries in accordance-with international law.

Pakistan: Further on Spokesman Remarks on Kashmir

BK2803145296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1400 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Pakistan has directed its missions and representatives abroad to raise the issue of Indian plans to physically eliminate the Kashmiri leadership, including the murder of the Kashmir human rights activist, Jalil Andrabi. An official spokesman in Islamabad has rejected allegations by the Indian prime minister on Sunday [24 March] last that Pakistan is interfering in occupied Kashmir. The spokesman said Indian leaders are using threatening language to divert the world attention from the fact that occupied Kashmir is besieged by 600,000 Indian troops. He said the gravity of the situation has not allowed India to hold elections in occupied Kashmir. The spokesman urged India that instead of making allegations, Pakistan's offer for a meaningful dialogue to resolve the core issue of Kashmir should be accepted.

Pakistan: UN Envoy Condemns Killing of Kashmiri Activist

BK2903044296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 0200 GMT 29 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Addressing Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Munir Akram, Pakistan's permanent representative at the United Nations, condemned the murder of human rights activist Jalil Andrabi by Indian troops in occupied Kashmir. He said this despicable crime has exposed the brutal and evil face of India and reflects how grave the human rights situation in occupied Kashmir is.

Munir Akram was responding to the baseless allegations made by the Indian ambassador. Highlighting the background of the abduction and the killing of Andrabi, he said India adopts these tactics to subjugate the Kashmiris. It is not merely a matter of custodial killings of Kashmiris, but a part of a coordinated plan to crush them. Munir Akram said he was speaking with a deep sense of sorrow over the plight and sufferings of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He reiterated that Kashmir is a disputed territory, as confirmed by the UN Security Council resolutions, UN maps, and the Security Council agenda. He said if the people of Kashmir decided to be a part of India, there would not have been any need for India to deploy 700,000 troops there to keep the Kashmiris in bondage. Munir Akram said like other colonial powers, India will also realize that the freedom the people are struggling for cannot be suppressed or compromised by fraud and deceit. Freedom will triumph in Kashmir.

Pakistan: Bhutto Denies Crisis Over Court Ruling on Judges

BK2803131096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1100 GMT 28 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has said the government has always accepted court's judgments and decrees and has started implementing the recent short order of the Supreme Court regarding appointment of judges without prejudice to opposition. Speaking in the National Assembly today, she said despite reservations, the government has started implementing the order and three ad hoc judges of the Supreme Court were confirmed this morning. Next week, consultation process for the appointment of chief justices of the high courts will begin. Meanwhile, it has been decided to invoke the advisory jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Article 186 of the Constitution as the government is conscious of the political and administrative fallout of the order.

She said at no time the government had stated that it will not implement the court order. She said the short order of the Supreme Court requires time for understanding as it has far-reaching consequences. It curbs the constitutional power of the president to appoint judges. The prime minister mentioned the names of judges who were appointed in the Supreme Court, Lahore High Court, and Balochistan High Court who could be affected by the judgment. Also, the judges appointed in eighties and nineties may also be affected. It may also lead to a large vacuum in the judicial structure of Pakistan.

The prime minister said the Judiciary can interpret the Constitution but the Constitution does not provide the Judiciary to write or strike down an article of the Constitution. The prime minister said the government was working for judicial harmony and do not consider this order against the Executive. All appointments of the judges are made after full consultation and in writing. She said her government does not want to see the Judiciary undermined. She said unfortunately, the last few days have seen the politicization of the Supreme Court order and some people claimed that a constitutional and political crisis has emerged. She emphasized in categorical terms that there was no crisis of political, constitutional or administrative nature. The constitutional framework contains adequate checks and balances providing a harmonious functioning of the three organs of the state — the Executive, Legislature, and the Judiciary.

The prime minister said the PDF [Pakistan Democratic Front] government is committed to work in accordance with the Constitution and law to the concept of independent judiciary for which the PPP [Pakistan People's Party] waged a relentless struggle and for which it introduced the Legal Reforms Bill before the National Assembly.

The prime minister made it clear that there is no confrontation between any organ of the state and they continue to function harmoniously in accordance with the Constitution. She said it is unfortunate that the opposition has tried to politically exploit the Judiciary. It has indulged in attacks on the courts and in hooliganism and arson, including the burning of cars in Lahore yesterday.

Responding to the speech of the prime minister, the leader of the opposition, Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, criticized the reservations expressed by the prime minister about the judgment. He again asked for immediate implementation of the judgment and said if the government feels that in future a new procedure of appointment of judges should be adopted then the opposition is ready to cooperate with the government in the National Assembly.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: Malaysian Authorities Detain LTTE 'Activists'

BK2803013896 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 28 Mar 96

[LANKAPUVATH report — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] COLOMBO, Wednesday [27 March] — A number of LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] activists have been detained by the Malaysian authorities following the governments' decision to crack down on the Tigers who are engaged in a campaign of brutal terrorism in Sri Lanka.

Official Malaysian sources said that known LTTE supporters too had been placed under strict surveillance.

The sources said that the Malaysian authorities have also found that a large number of Malaysia's two million Tamils are contributing some voluntarily others forcibly to the LTTE to fund Tiger terrorism in Sri Lanka.

The sources said the Malaysian authorities had decided to take timely action to prevent the LTTE launching a separatist Tamil movement among Malaysia's two million Tamils.

Sri Lanka: Civilians Reportedly Defy LTTE Call To Leave North

BK2703103396 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 27 Mar 96

[LANKAPUVATH report — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Colombo, Tuesday [26 March] — Residents of the Vedamarachchi and Thenmarachchi divisions in Jaffna are refusing to heed the LTTE's [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] call to leave the northern peninsula following reports of an imminent offensive by the security forces to re-take these two remaining areas under LTTE control. These residents have braved the wrath of the Tigers and told the terrorists, "Kill us if you will, we are not leaving".

Official sources said that according to intelligence reports even residents of the Tiger leader Prabhakaran's native village 'Velvetiturai', on the peninsula's north-eastern seaboard, have summarily turned down the LTTE call.

The intelligence reports state that the Tiger threats had been reduced this week to pleas, but the citizens of Vedamarachchi and Thenmarachchi have refused to budge from their homes.

These citizens had told the LTTE that they did not want to undergo the same bitter experience as the 200,000 residents of Jaffna city most of them of the wealthy and middle classes, who were forced out of their homes at gunpoint by the terrorists, as troops of Operation Riviresa [Sunshine] re-took Jaffna in December last year.

They have told the Tigers, that they had no intention of moving out of Killinochchi on the northern mainland, where the refugees from Jaffna are housed in small 8 x 8 foot cadjan huts with no proper amenities such as toilets and water supply, while 40 per cent of the food sent them by the government is robbed by the Tigers whose leaders live princely lives in well-equipped homes and drive round in pajeros.

The refugees' attempts to return to their homes in Jaffna which they were forced to abandon, have been thwarted by the Tigers and those who tried to escape have been killed by the terrorists.

Sri Lanka: Tigers Report 3 Leaders Killed in East

BK2703103096 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 27 Mar 96

[Unattributed report — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] in a broadcast on its clandestine radio has admitted that three of their military leaders in the east were killed by troops during the battle at Sittandy in Batticaloa last Saturday [23 March].

The broadcast has identified the three as Major Rathan, Lt. Ellakiyan and Lt. Marathran and described the attack as their biggest so far in the current year, our Vavuniya special correspondent said.

Troops had killed at least 60 Tigers when they beat back the massive attack by a group of about 300 tigers on the Sittandy army camp on Saturday. The army lost 40 men.

As usual, the LTTE broadcast had made no reference to the death of their other cadres, military sources said.

The Navy destroyed an LTTE boat which defied a halt order off the Muttur coast around 7.30 pm on Sunday.

The fate of three LTTE cadres on board is yet unknown, our Trincomalee Group Correspondent reported yesterday.

The boat was carrying food and other items for Tigers from Upparu to Muttur when it was detected by the navy.

Meanwhile the damage to the Akkaraipattu telephone exchange which was blasted in the early hours on Monday, is estimated at Rs. [rupees] 30 million.

Sri Lanka: Radio Reports 15 Soldiers Killed in Tiger Attack

BK2603115396 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English
1045 GMT 26 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A large group of terrorists attacked a security forces patrol at Pulmoddai in the Trincomalee District yesterday. Troops retaliated effectively, causing heavy Tiger casualties. Reinforcements were also rushed in from the Pulmoddai and (Aradpatnaga) detachments. The Operational Headquarters of the Defense Ministry says that 15 soldiers were killed and three others wounded during the confrontation.

Meanwhile, LANKAPUVATH reports that the LTTE's military wing leader for Eravur was seriously wounded in Saturday's [23 March] abortive attack on the Eravur police station. The news agency quoted SSP [Senior Superintendent of Police] Tilak Wanikaratne as saying that Suresh was being treated in a village in the Batticaloa District.

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